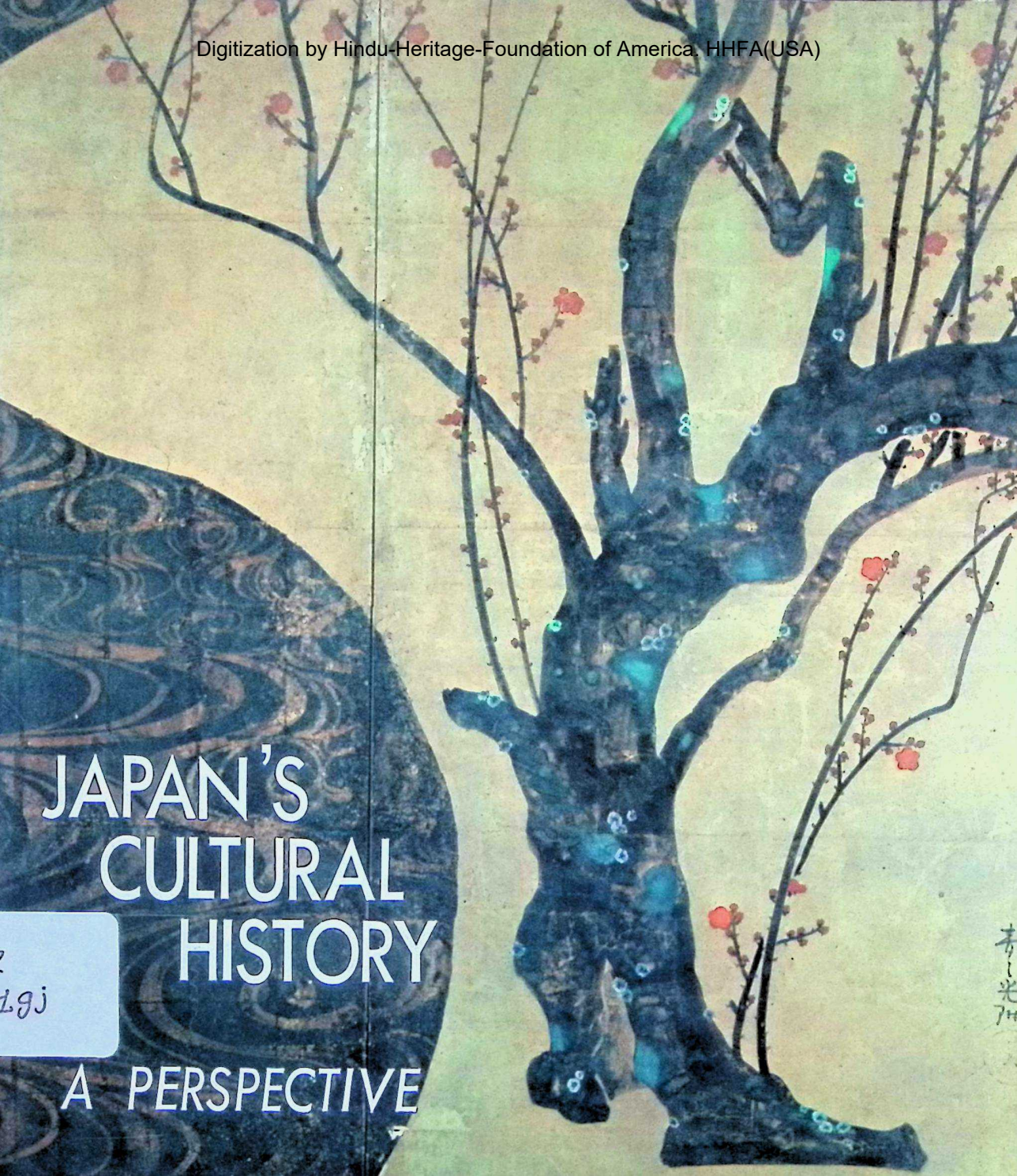




JAPAN'S CULTURAL HISTORY

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A PERSPECTIVE

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JAPAN'S CULTURAL HISTORY

— A PERSPECTIVE —

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FOREWORD

Japan, in the course of its long history, has produced a remarkable national culture. Certain aspects of this culture have been nurtured by the Japanese from sources and inspiration within themselves, while other aspects, introduced from the Asian continent and in more recent times from the West, have been tempered according to Japanese tastes and incorporated as intrinsic elements of the culture.

“Japan’s Cultural Development — A Perspective” is an attempt to trace the developmental process of this culture in terms of origins and historical periods and to define more closely what is frequently referred to as the “uniqueness” of Japan’s cultural heritage.

The four authors of the joint study, Professors Yutaka Tazawa and Saburo Matsubara, Assistant Professor Shunsuke Okuda and Mr. Yasunori Nagahata, have limited their field to the formative arts, thereby permitting a clearer statement of gradual change and growing diversity in Japan’s cultural development. This also gives witness to Japan’s historical encounters with the outside world that have continued off and on throughout the ancient, middle and modern ages.

This approach should allow the reader to recognize that the various themes of Japanese culture, while representing an unmistakable Japanese sense of value, go beyond their individual subject matter to embody the universal emotions and desires of all mankind.

The Ministry offers this publication, with the authors’ kind permission, in the belief that it will contribute to a further understanding of Japan’s culture and the position it occupies in the continuous flow of world cultural history.

Director-General for Public Information and Cultural Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

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JAPAN'S CULTURAL HISTORY

— A PERSPECTIVE —

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Although a product of the cultural heritage of the Orient, Japanese culture is nevertheless noted for its uniqueness. Were one to try to characterize it in a few words, it might be said to reveal a preference for internal grace as opposed to external splendor.

The sense of beauty characteristic of the Japanese, as expressed in such concepts as *miyabi* (refined elegance), *mono no aware* (pathos of nature), *wabi* (quiet taste) and *sabi* (elegant simplicity), suggests a world of aesthetic and emotional harmony. The distinctive Japanese culture we have today is the result of a series of encounters between traditional Japanese culture and foreign cultures through which the latter were imported, absorbed, and harmoniously blended with the former. Some of the noteworthy characteristics of this process might be said to include a flexibility and openness toward alien cultures. Rather than rejecting the latter, the Japanese have chosen to fit them into their own aesthetic framework, often quite creatively adapting them to Japanese needs.

"Culture" is a general term for such areas as learning, religion and the arts which again can be segmented into literature, fine arts and music. It thus becomes extremely difficult to generalize when talking about Japanese culture as a total phenomenon.

Nevertheless, we may apply such commentaries as the one made above to at least the field of the formative arts.

Criticisms have been voiced in various sectors of contemporary Japan that the Japanese people are perhaps excessive in their anxious efforts to adopt and assimilate the materialistic and mechanic civilization of the West, at the price of losing much of their traditional aesthetic sensitivity. And one is inclined to give these criticisms their due in view of the thread of destruction of natural beauty engendered by widespread environmental pollution.

Were the Japanese of today really allowing themselves to be uncritically submerged by the flow of Western civilization, there would indeed be a need for urgent changes in their thinking and action; at the same time, those who are inclined to lament the decline of traditional Japanese culture without offering any specific factual evidence might be advised to review the history of the development of Japanese culture, and to consider, once again, what Japanese culture really is.

This presentation is an attempt to understand contemporary Japan and its culture by studying the process by which the ancestors of today's Japanese race "Japanized" alien cultures. In order to facilitate such a study, we may divide Japanese history into five distinctive cultural epochs: Archaic Age, Early Historic Age, Medieval Age, Pre-modern Age and Modern Age.

It would be quite impossible to adequately survey in detail each of these periods in this small booklet. It will be more instructive to trace the development of a single field, that of the formative arts, through the above-mentioned periods.

The beginning of the formative arts in Japan dates back to the Archaic (prehistoric and protohistoric) Age, — some time around 7,000 B.C. — when *Jōmon*-type earthenware vessels were being made. These artifacts were made of unglazed fired clay

decorated with cord-markings. Also produced in the Archaic Age, which continued until the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century A.D., were the *Yayoi*-type earthenware vessels (4th century B.C. to 4th century A.D.) and the gigantic tombs from the *Kofun* (tumuli) Period (4th century A.D.). The Yayoi Period was distinguished by the introduction of agriculture and metal implements from the Asian Continent. This first cultural period of the Archaic Age stretched from Japan's prehistoric age down to the time when Japan was first united as a nation-state under an imperial system; it was characterized by the importation of foreign cultures, especially during the aforementioned Yayoi Period when the pottery produced showed more diversity of form and yet more simplified designs.

The Early Historic Age may be called an era of Buddhist culture. Although cultural influences from the Continent had already made their way to Japan during the previous period, it was during this age that Continental culture was to actually flourish in Japan in consequence to the introduction of Buddhism. The results, in terms of Buddhist architecture, sculpture and painting, were prodigious enough to warrant calling this period the golden age of Buddhist art.

The bulk of the foreign imports came from the cosmopolitan and exotic Chinese society under the T'ang Dynasty whose overwhelming influence on Japan during this period resulted in the latter's indirect assimilation of a considerable amount of international culture.

(The Western world during this same period was seeing the fall of the Eastern Gothic Kingdom, the establishment of the Roman Papacy under Gregory I, and the construction of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.)

This era of Buddhist culture may be subdivided into three

different periods: the Asuka Period (late 6th century – early 7th century), Hakuho Period (late 7th century – early 8th century) and Tempyō Period (8th century). These divisions reflect the changing attitudes of the Japanese in terms of their receptivity of Chinese and Korean cultures.

The beginning of aristocratic rule in the newly-established capital of Kyoto was to mean a considerable transformation for Japanese culture in this new period of Heian, as it was called. Chinese T'ang culture dominated the period for a 100 years or so, but in the Latter Heian (10th – 12th century), also known as the Fujiwara Period, there was a turn away from Chinese culture in favor of a new distinctly Japanese culture.

Also characteristic of the times was a decline in the performance of duty on the part of State officials. Actual administrative functions were left in the hands of minor officials so that their superiors might be able to devote themselves to an aesthetic enjoyment of nature and art within their exclusive society. In fact, it was this very leisure afforded to the elite which made possible the development of these cultural activities which, in turn, gave rise to a uniquely Japanese culture of unsurpassed refinement.

The matriarchal family system, in existence since the days of the most rudimentary social organization in Japan, was still a major characteristic of Japanese society in the Heian Period. Women were able to hold their own against men in ways that were not to become possible again for a thousand years. There were even instances of female manorial “lords” as well as women who were economically independent or who possessed fine cultural ability. This may explain the often referred to “feminine” imprint on the culture of this period as seen, for example, in the aesthetic consciousness of *mono no aware* (pathos of nature).

(In Europe, the Frankish Kingdom was about to set up a

feudal system, while the Greek Orthodox Church was coming into existence, thus completing the split which had taken place between the Eastern Church in Constantinople and the Western Church in Rome in 1054.)

During the early thirteenth century, Japan found itself under the rule of a new warrior class (*bushi*), which not only eclipsed the aristocratic prerogative to rule, but also went on to leave its imprint on the national culture. Deriving their power from among the local wealthy agricultural class, these warriors had become a revolutionary force able to topple the traditional ruling class, which had held on to its power ever since the establishment of the Imperial State in the Early Historic Age. With the decline of aristocratic power and the rise of the warrior class, however, Japan entered the Medieval Age of feudal society.

Obviously, the new class could not overturn the entire State structure with one blow. Several centuries of compromise with the aristocracy were necessary before the feudal system became firmly established. The same was true in the cultural sphere, where the traditional classics did not just vanish. Indeed, there is even evidence that the *bushi* themselves sought to reconcile the newly-arising popular culture with the declining aristocratic culture of the 12th and 13th centuries.

One cannot discuss the Medieval Age and its culture without noting the contribution of Zen Buddhism, introduced from Sung China. It was upon this new cult that the culture and ethic of the warrior class was actually based. In terms of art and culture in general, however, the full impact of Zen did not emerge until the establishment of the Ashikaga Government in Kyoto, subsequent to the period when the Imperial Court was split into the rivaling Southern and Northern Courts in the fourteenth century. Zen art then became the dominant cultural current of Japan.

During the Muromachi Period (15th century – early 16th century), Zen culture underwent a process of refinement during which it shed its religious trappings. Two representative products of this age are *Gozan Bungaku* (or five monasteries literature) and *suiboku-ga* (carbon-ink monochrome paintings). Gozan referred to the five major Zen temples in Kyoto (and later to five Zen temples in Kamakura). This appellation followed the Sung custom of China of dignifying certain temples. In Japan, priests of the Gozan temples acted as political and diplomatic advisors to the Government, or played leading roles in the academic and artistic activities of the Muromachi Period. Thus, Gozan literature and *suiboku-ga*, which were originally manifestations of the cultural activities of Zen priests toward the close of the sixteenth century, were producing a culture which could be identified as a truly Japanese one in terms of its aesthetic consciousness. (Contemporaneously in Europe, Copernicus announced his famous theory of heliocentrism, and the death of Michaelangelo in 1564 brought to an end a major period in Italian art.)

During the sixteenth century, clashes and jockeying for power under local warlords (*daimyo*) led to the emergence of a unified national feudal structure under three successive great figures in Japanese history – Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. In contrast to this historical development in Japan, contemporary European feudal society had already entered a period of decline as political power shifted from the aristocracy to the monarchy, and the monarchs, with the support of powerful commercial capital, were able to establish wealthy absolutist states equipped with bureaucracies and permanent standing armies.

The history of Japan between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries is known successively as the Azuchi-Momoyama Period (late 16th century), under the reigns of Oda

and Toyotomi, and the Edo Period (17th – 19th centuries) of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

The spirit of liberalism and exuberance that had characterized the earlier years of warrior class rule continued to flow in the Azuchi-Momoyama Period, which witnessed frequent and enthusiastic communications and trade activities with various nations of the world. In tune with this commercial spirit was the vibrant culture of the Azuchi-Momoyama Period. The leaders of Azuchi-Momoyama society were the *bushi* and wealthy merchants, whose spirit was directly reflected in the grand-scale and commanding character of the culture of the time, exemplified by the impressive powerful castle architecture produced.

At the same time, there was also a tendency, not unlike that of the European Renaissance, to look back to the classical Court culture. This occurred especially in the areas of calligraphy and painting, the representative works of which clearly reveal a typically Japanese emphasis on serene elegance.

During the succeeding Edo Period, Azuchi-Momoyama culture underwent a branching-off and metamorphosis. Although its influence was still considerable in the early Edo Period, the unified Tokugawa society soon produced a culture of its own. Art of the Azuchi-Momoyama culture was felt to have become excessively formalistic, indicative of the fact that the *bushi* could not, after all, contribute much to the development of art and literature; for the feudalistic ethics, the rules and rituals of Confucianism and Bushido (the warrior ethic) had the effect of curbing the free and natural expression of inner feelings. It was thus that the common people were to become the leaders of Japanese culture for the first time in history, and in the Edo Period, there dawned a new era of flourishing plebeian culture.

There were also in the culture of the Edo Period remnants of

the influence of the Ming and Ch'ing cultures of China. And toward the close of the Edo Period, Japanese culture was to encounter an entirely new influence, Western culture, as it embarked on the road to a modern industrial society.

The Meiji Restoration in the middle of the nineteenth century signaled the opening of the gates, and Western culture flooded into Japan. Within a short period thereafter, Japan found herself a member of the club of modern nations of the world.

As we have tried to point out in this brief survey, the Japanese people, from as far back as the Jōmon Period, have continuously created and fostered the growth of new culture vis-à-vis foreign culture through a process of its assimilation and adaptation. While certain phenomena tend to retain the deep coloring of their varied origins, others have taken on a uniquely Japanese essence through a process of distillation and refinement.

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE AND CULTURE IN THE ARCHAIC AGE

Japanese life in the Archaic Age was that characteristic of a primitive society, i.e., one in which neither class nor power structure had as yet clearly emerged. Traditionally in Japanese history, however, the term “primitive age” is loosely applied to the period dating from the beginning of its prehistoric age — some 300,000 years ago, when the Japanese archipelago was geographically separated from the Eurasian Continent — to the rise of the Imperial State around the sixth century A.D. The subdivisions referred to previously — Jōmon (Neolithic Age), Yayoi (Bronze Age), and Kofun periods — derive from the cultural variations apparent from archeological relics from these periods.

About 10,000 years ago, the inhabitants of Japan abandoned their cave dwellings and settled down in crudely roofed houses, known as *tate-ana jukyo* (pit dwellings), supported by pillars built over shallow cavities dug into the ground. These primitive people lived by hunting and fishing, or under what is termed a “food-gathering economy.” The term “primitive society,” implying the absence of power and class structures, is most fittingly applicable to this Jōmon Period which continued for several thousand years through the fourth-third centuries B.C.

The creativeness and simplicity of the Jōmon people are most

clearly manifested in the earthenware vessels known as Jōmon pottery. The unsophisticated and sometimes even garish impression that these vessels give is also a sign of the palpitating vitality of the people who lived in constant struggle against the relentless forces of nature.

In both form and ornamentation, Jōmon vessels are highly variegated, a fact indicative of the high standard of craftsmanship already in existence by this time. Ironically, however, in spite of this sophistication, the Jōmon people were quite backward as producers, considering that husbandry and the use of bronze implements were already established practices in China from as early as the thirteenth century B.C.

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY LIFE

The geographical separateness of the Japanese archipelago was one of the factors that prevented Japanese culture from developing beyond the Neolithic stage for a long time. At some time between the third and second centuries B.C., a culture of Chinese origin, already possessing a highly developed metal culture, reached Japan. Its influence permeated the island, and the ancestors of the Japanese people were introduced to the art of agriculture as well as the use of metal implements. The latter, including both bronze and iron, constituted the somewhat abrupt entry of Japan into the Iron Age.

The advent of an agriculture centered on rice cultivation using elevated paddy fields led to a rise in the quality of life of the people, who eventually began to adopt a community form of life. Ways of evaluating the quality and quantity of labor supplied by each member of the community were determined, and along with these there arose distinctions of wealth between rich and poor —



1 Deep bowl with flame ornament, Jōmon Pottery. The vital force of primeval people, striving in the austere environment of nature, is well exhibited in the powerful flame decoration.



2 Jar with human mask ornament, Yayoi Pottery. The elongated form of the vase suggests a human body. The jar was probably not a utility piece but was intended for use in religious rituals.

the beginning of a class structure. Further social and political distinctions resulted between the ruler and the ruled, in time producing over 100 small states. After two and a half centuries of fierce power struggles, the state of Yamato emerged victorious, and unified the many smaller states under its rule.

The culture of the early stage of this period, during which metal implements were in use, is called Yayoi, and is distinguished from the earlier Jōmon culture by its distinctive reddish-grey earthenware vessels. The marked preference for simplicity revealed in the latter is in sharp contrast to the highly ornamental quality of Jōmon-type vessels.

Another feature of this period was the appearance of wooden implements such as ladles, hammers, ploughs and pestles. Bronze articles included swords, spears and *dōtaku*, or cylindrical bell-shaped objects with flattened sides and flanges employed for ritual purposes.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL POWER

Recent archeological undertakings have excavated a number of sepulchral mounds (*kofun*) throughout Japan, but especially in the Kinki District. These mounds have their origin in the period between the fourth and sixth centuries A.D., and are most characteristically of the shape known as *zenpō kōen fun*, literally "sepulchral mounds rectangular in front and circular at the rear" (key-hole-shaped). Each of these kofun was originally surrounded by a moat, and the sheer scale of them suggests that a tremendous amount of labor must have gone into their construction. Another indication of the magnitude of power and influence wielded are the exquisite objects of art that have been excavated from the tombs. These graves, of course, were reserved for members of the

ruling class, and their existence indicates to us that the Imperial State of Yamato that arose in the Kinki District could by the third or fourth century A.D. boast a unified state structure stretching as far as Kyushu to the south.

Accompanying the human remains found in the tombs are such articles as mirrors, swords, armor, trappings, and such personal ornaments as earrings, bracelets, crowns and shoes. In some cases, horses had been buried alive with their masters. Most characteristic of the artifacts found in the tombs are *haniwa* or terra-cotta figurines, which were customarily arranged in a circle around the surface of the tumulus. Representing as they do humans, animals, furniture, implements for daily use and so forth, *haniwa* are an important source of information on culture and manners of life of the time.

During the Kofun Period, the custom of living in houses with elevated floors built on tall pillars became an established practice, first among upper class people and gradually among the common-folk. These houses had roof ridges surmounted by ornamental wooden blocks and were equipped with proper entrances and windows; there were also high-floored warehouses or granaries. Some of the more refined examples of this type of architecture are preserved to this day in the Taisha, Sumiyoshi or Shimmei styles of Shinto shrines.

The religion of these times was largely animistic and consisted of nature-worship. There was no clear distinction between divine and human, between nature and divinity. The religious sentiments of the people reflected their dependence on and consequent fear of nature, whose sanctity was promoted by taboos and sorcery. Some scholars of primitive religion in Japan hold that the cult of sorcery, which was a part of agricultural ritual, became the basis for the later national cult of Shintoism. It is clear,

however, that these primitive cults of nature worship gradually developed into those of the worship of ancestral deities during the Kofun Period, as testified to by the numerous shrines built.



- 3 Dōtaku (bell-shaped bronze) with crossed bands design. This pre-historic bronze for an unknown purpose is decorated with a line-relief design of motives associated with annual functions centered around agricultural life.



- 4 *Haniwa figure of a seated woman. Haniwa are terra-cotta cylinders surmounted by various representational shapes, arranged on or around a tumulus in honor of the buried. Though technically simple, they are impressive works of sculpture.*



5 Tomb of Emperor Nintoku. Huge tombs covered with tumuli were built for clan chieftains during the Kofun (ancient burial mounds) Period. Shown here is the largest tomb of this type.



6 Izumo Taisha (Great Shrine of Izumo). Rebuilt periodically until 1744, this shrine has faithfully retained the tradition of the taisha-zukuri, a style of Shinto architecture whose origin dates back to the primeval age.

CHAPTER THREE

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE ASSIMILA- TION OF BUDDHIST CULTURE

INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHISM

The sixth century witnessed the introduction of Buddhism into Japan. (The traditional date for the official introduction of Buddhism from Paekche, one of the three Korean states that had relations with Japan, is 538.)

To the Japanese people of that time, the gods were felt to be not just protectors of mankind and givers of happiness, but also nefarious and avenging forces capable of dealing destruction when the people's prayers and rituals were not satisfactory. In sharp contrast to these Japanese deities, the alien god, Buddha, came with a gospel of mercy and salvation for mankind in an afterlife. Japanese intellectuals welcomed this alien doctrine with a mixture of awe and elation.

The common people, however, observed no distinction between the Buddhistic religious practices and those of their native cult of sorcery and nature-worship, so that they never considered it a contradiction when they offered prayers in shrines to appease the ire of their gods and in the same breath recited prayers appealing to the saving grace of Buddha.

There was one man who really apprehended the essence of Buddhism as a religion proclaiming man's need for deliverance

from the “illusions” of the mundane world, rather than as just a cult with a magical formula to keep away calamities. This person was Prince Shōtoku. There is a traditional view, impossible to substantiate, that there arose a controversy among the aristocrats as to whether Buddhism should be adopted or rejected.

During this period of the entry of Buddhism to Japan, the Yamato nation was beginning to evolve from a power structure consisting of influential clans into a centralized government. The Court's decision to utilize Buddhism as a political tool, along with Prince Shōtoku's fervent adoption and patronage of the new religion, assured it flourishing success in its new environment.

It was thus that Buddhism at this time gave rise to some of the most magnificent Japanese cultural achievements in the fields of architecture, sculpture, painting and decorative arts. These efforts were sponsored by the powerful Yamato Court in order to impress the people and extend the power of the Government.

BUDDHIST CULTURE

The period of about one century between the arrival of Buddhism and the establishment of a central government under the Taika Reform (645) is known as the Asuka Period. This was an age of assimilation of the foreign Buddhist culture, effected through study of Chinese translations of the sutras and Korean sculptural techniques learned from China. The Chinese and Korean culture with which Japan came into contact contained cultural influences from India and countries even further west, so that the Asuka culture may be said to have derived from the cultural heritages of virtually the entire Orient.

Today Buddhism no longer provides the full social functions it used to; Buddhist temples tend to be associated merely with

funeral or memorial services. Yet, in the days of the Yamato Court Buddhist temples were the symbols of the power and the wealth of the ruling class, and as such constituted the center of a new culture.

The vermillion-painted columns, the magnificent edifices of Continental origin characterized by ornate eaves-supports (known as *masu-hijiki*), the images of Buddhist deities sculpted in "dry-lacquer," or in gilt bronze, the brilliantly colored religious paintings — these products of Continental art struck a deep chord in the Japanese aesthetic consciousness which, nevertheless, found its fullest expression in artistic achievements that ultimately took their inspiration from what was native and particular to the Japanese spirit.

Buddhist temple architecture constituted a new cultural departure in Japanese architecture. It contrasted sharply with the crude cottage dwellings of the ordinary people. No original piece of architecture definitely datable to the Asuka Period remains today. Our notions of these temples depend on the building plans that have been preserved. The latter suggests the existence of two prevalent types of models, the Shitennōji type and the Hōryūji type.

Perhaps most indicative of the nature of Asuka culture is the edifice of Hōryūji Temple. Although the original structure, which dated back to the early 7th century, was destroyed by fire in 670, we still have existing today the reconstructed edifice which dates from the end of that same century, and which reveals the distinctive characteristics of Asuka architecture in its method of construction.

There are also extant numerous works of Buddhist sculpture from the Asuka Period which have been preserved in the Hōryūji. Chief among them are the Shaka Triad (Śākyamuni and two

attendants) by Kuratsukuribe-no-Obito Tori in 623, which rests in the Kondō (Main Hall), and the statue of Kannon (in Sanskrit, Avalokiteshvara) in the Yumedono (Hall of Dreams). Created as a memorial to Prince Shōtoku, the countenance of the Shaka Triad is said to emit an "archaic smile," and the flare of its robe gives a triangular (isosceles) contour to the figure. The artistic symbolism of the Shaka Triad clearly reflects the characteristics of Asuka sculpture, which reflects the disciplined and organized technique of Chinese sculpture of the later Northern Wei Period.

The statue of the Kudara Kannon in the Hōryūji is another example of Asuka culture. In contrast to the Shaka Triad, this Kannon gives a milder and gentler impression. The techniques involved here differ from those used by Tori, the creator of the Shaka Triad, suggesting the existence of a group of artists not of the Tori school, and whose techniques seem to derive from the masters of the Northern Chou and Northern Chi dynasties of China in the latter part of the sixth century.

Many of the artists of the Asuka Period were either naturalized Japanese of Chinese or Korean origin or their descendants. There is little doubt that they had been totally assimilated in terms of their psychology and social attitudes, for their works were distinctively Japanese, in spite of the fact that they had learned from Chinese and Korean models.

FLOURISHING OF BUDDHIST CULTURE

With the Taika Reform (645), the Court removed the source of its instability by ousting the Soga family, the most powerful of a coalition of clans which had controlled the government, and established a central government equipped with a legislative structure on the model of T'ang China. The period from the Taika

Reform until the establishment of the capital in Nara in 710 is known as the Hakuho Period in the history of Japanese art. As Buddhism continued to flourish under government protection, the cultural tendency of this period was also largely Buddhist.

During the Hakuho Period, official interchange with T'ang China was also begun, and envoys were sent to the Continent from time to time. This increased contact with the Continent contributed much to the formation of the culture of this period. In Hakuho sculpture, for instance, strong Chinese influences of Sui and early T'ang are manifest. Most representative of the artistic works of this time is the bronze Buddha head in the Kofukuji Temple. It is famed for its beautiful, childlike expression, especially in the eyes.

Hakuho culture reflects the confidence of the ruling class following the establishment of this new legislative structure. The culture of the period overflows with healthy, affirmative vitality, not just in the domain of art, but also in the literature of the period, as, for example, in the *Manyōshū*, a collection of poems reflecting a high degree of artistry and refinement.

Also during this period, enthusiasm for erecting Buddhist temples and creating Buddhist statues spread from the Capital to the provinces, where artists gave a strong local color to many of the gilt bronze statues that they produced. This may be taken as evidence that Buddhist culture had by this time spread to all parts of the nation.

The work of art that spoke most eloquently of the high level of refinement attained by Hakuho culture was probably the mural painting in the Kondō of Hōryūji Temple. It is most unfortunate that this painting was lost in a fire in 1949, for it was an example of exceptional originality in spite of the technical influence that the artists had received from India. The loss is all the more

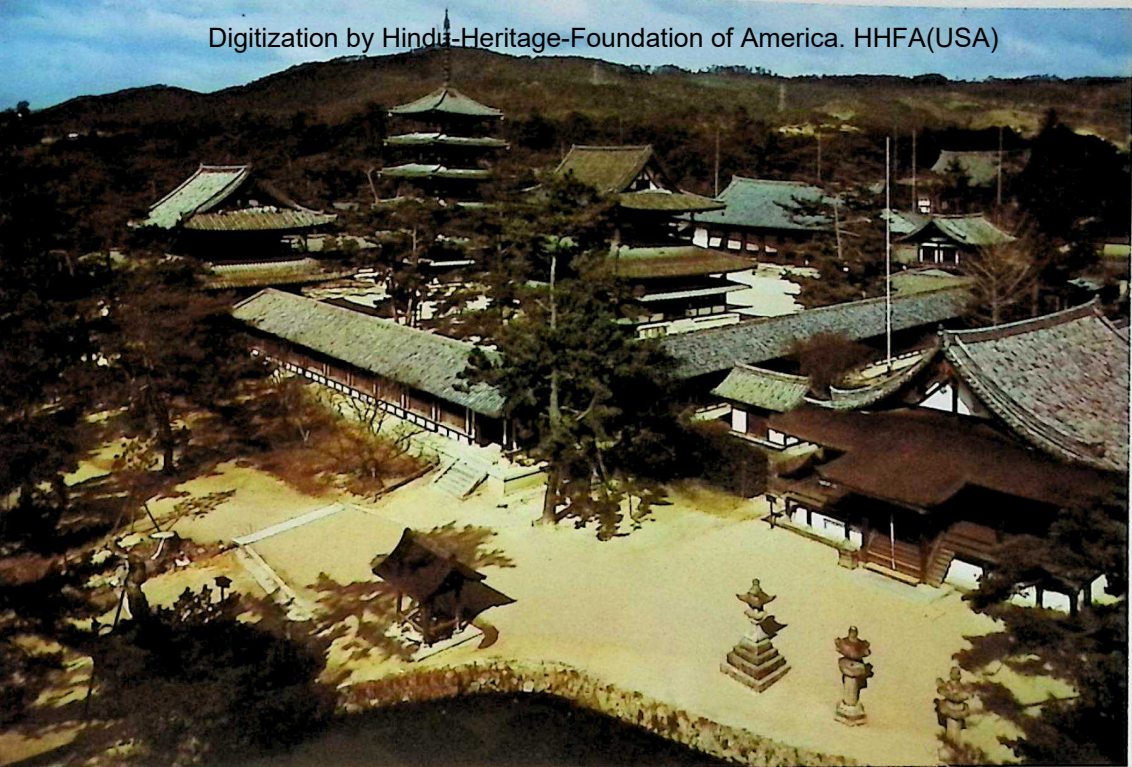
regrettable because it was an irreplaceable cultural heritage clearly indicative of the harmonization between traditional Japanese domestic culture and foreign cultures which constituted the unique quality of Japanese art.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASSICAL CULTURE

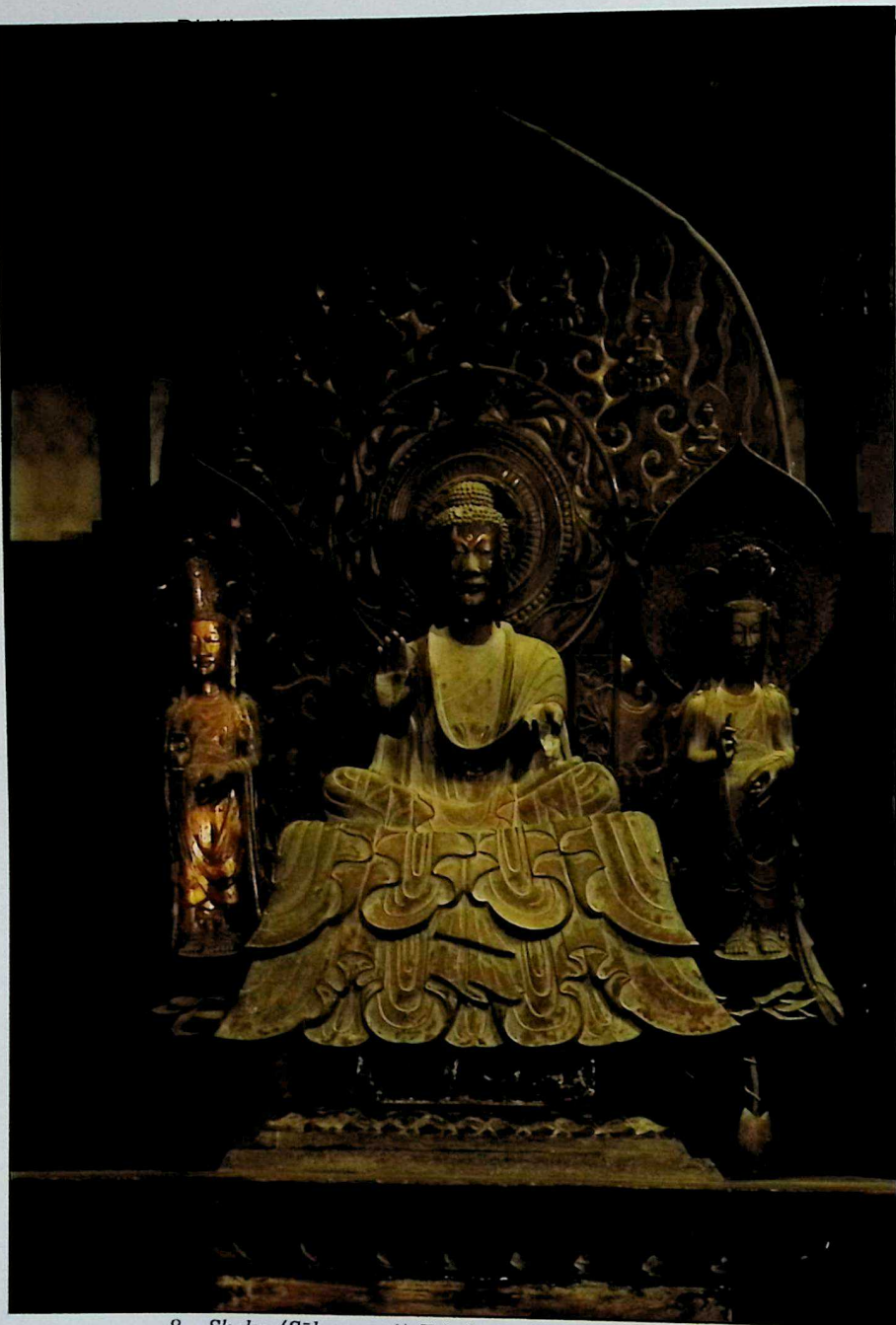
The Tempyō Period under the reign of Emperor Shōmu began in 710 with the establishment of the seat of government in the city of Nara, and ended in 794 when the capital was transferred to Kyoto. The progress of the nation was given direction by the Government's policy of active assimilation of Chinese and Korean culture, and the Japanese culture of the time shows a magnitude of scale commensurate with the national prosperity and advanced level of culture of these nations which influenced Japan.

With the growth of enthusiasm at the Court for Buddhism, prominent religious powers moved into the new capital at Nara. The magnificent temples and religious edifices built at this time marked the zenith of Buddhist culture in Japan. The policy of promoting Buddhism was pursued with utmost vigor during the reign of Emperor Shōmu, who decreed that provincial temples (known as *Kokubunji*) be erected in each province throughout the country and ordered the construction of the colossal Tōdaiji Temple, head of provincial temples in Nara, to house the giant Daibutsu (Great Buddha statue). The enthusiasm of the ruling class for things Buddhist at this time approached what we might today term a craze.

The artistic achievements of this period remain a marvel for art lovers today. It is generally accepted that the standards achieved by the Tempyō artists resulted not only from their determination to excel in their art, but also from the strong



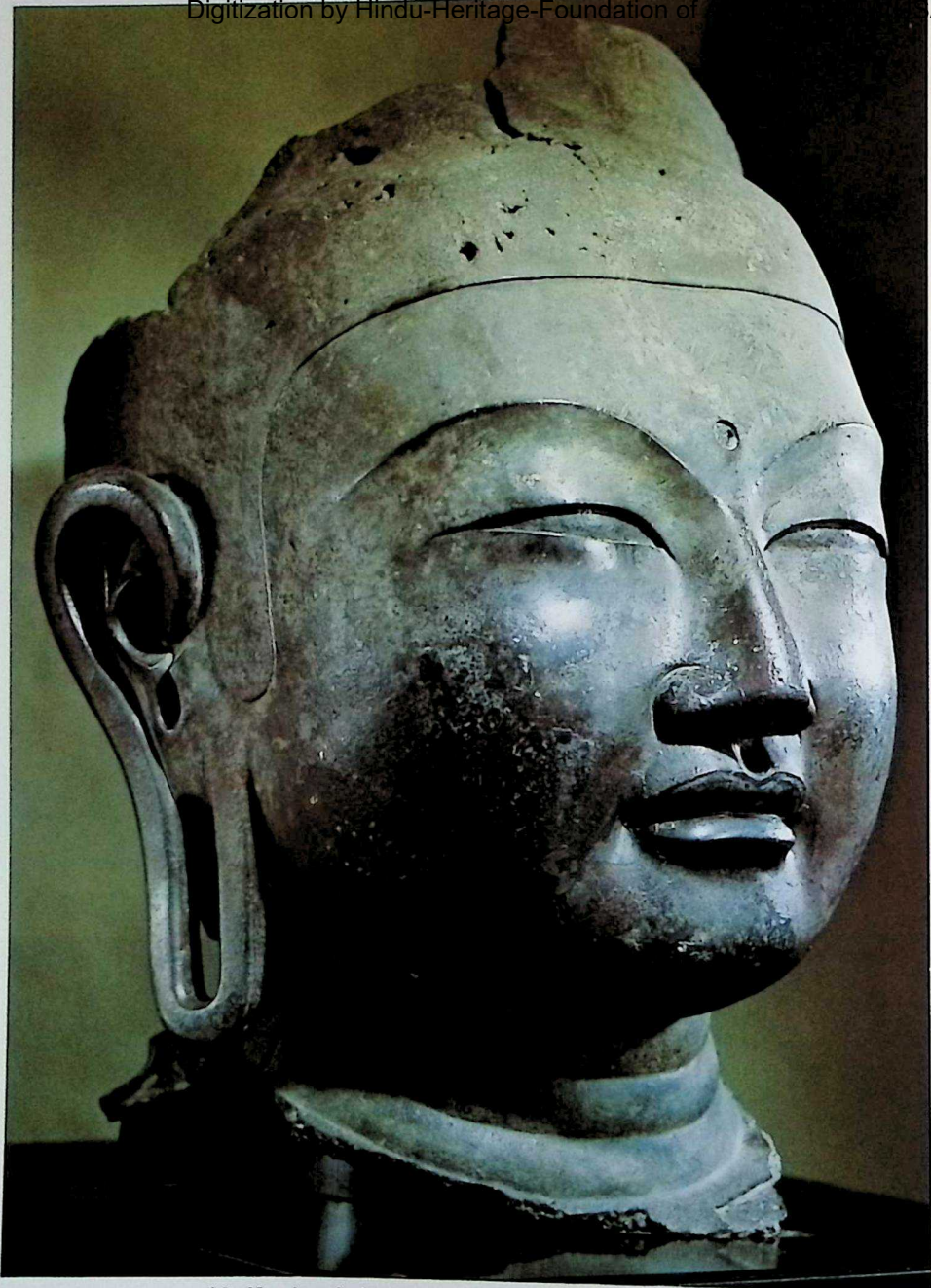
7 Western Precinct of Hōryūji Temple. The temple plan with the Main Hall and the Pagoda in opposite and balanced positions is peculiar to Hōryūji, which is the oldest wooden building in the world.



8 *Shaka (Sākyamuni) Triad. By Kuratsukuri-no-Obito Tori. With its highly stylized representation and faces displaying an "archaic smile," this triad is typical of the earliest forms of Buddhist sculpture in Japan.*



9 Wall-painting of Hōryūji Temple. The painting executed in powerful lines and balanced composition reflects the influence of murals at Ajanta, India.



10 Head of Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaisajyaguru). Buddhist sculpture became more realistic during the Nara Period. As typified by this piece, it is characterized by vigorous, dignified and idealized interpretations.

religious sentiments then prevailing.

Assimilation of Continental culture did not mean, however, the concomitant adoption of the philosophies and fundamental patterns of social structure which were the generative sources of those cultural products. Accordingly, foreign cultures did not result in a major transformation of Japanese life and thought, nor did they overwhelm the traditional Japanese culture. There developed rather a kind of mutual co-existence of the two types of culture. The staying force of the indigenous Japanese culture is attested to by the aforementioned *Manyōshū*, a voluminous collection of 4,400 poems whose authors ranged from aristocrats to ordinary commoners. The collection abounds in poems which testify to the healthy psychology and robust vitality of the Japanese people. For it was undoubtedly these characteristics which generated the grandeur and power of Tempyō culture.

The Chinese culture of the T'ang Dynasty incorporated the various cultures of the Orient, giving it a cosmopolitan as well as exotic nature. One of the characteristic features of T'ang art was its highly ornamental tendency, which to the Japanese aesthetic consciousness appeared excessively decorative, superficial and lacking in internal grace and subtlety.

This aesthetic orientation of the Japanese people is visible in such works of art as the statue of Kannon in the Shōrinji Temple, and those of Nikkō (*Sūryaprabhā*-sunlight) and Gakkō (*Āndraprabhā*-moonlight) in the Hokkedō of Tōdaiji Temple. These works suggest the unique Japanese sense of harmony through their serene and highly spiritual quality. The art of the Tempyō Period may truly be called the crystallization of Japanese classical art.

Of the existing examples of Buddhist architecture of the period, the Hokkedō of the Tōdaiji Temple and the Kondō of the Tōshōdaiji Temple are the most worthy of note. The considerable

production of religious statues featured ones made of clay or "dry-lacquer" (layers of hemp cloth glued together and covered with lacquer). Chief among the representative works at this time were the Yakushi Triad (Bhaisajyaguru and two attendants) enshrined in the Yakushiji Temple, the Hachibu-shū (Eight Supernatural Guardians of the Buddha) and the Jū-dai-deshi (Ten Great Disciples of the Buddha) of the Kōfukuji Temple, and the image of the Fukū Kensaku Kannon (*Amoghapaśa*) to which the Hokke-dō of the Tōdaiji Temple is dedicated. All of the foregoing give an impression of youthful vitality and are noteworthy for their realistic style.

The later part of the Tempyō Period, however, was characterized by a predilection for sensitivity and controlled grace, qualities which contrasted with the grandeur and vitality of Hakuho sculpture, and which tended to result in a diminishing of the compelling force which the earlier works convey.

It was at just this time that Japanese Buddhist art received a new stimulus through the visit of the Chinese monk Ganjin. Tōshōdaiji Temple, which Ganjin erected, contains a number of wooden sculptures which are believed to be the creations of Chinese artists who accompanied him. These works were to strongly influence the subsequent Jōgan style of sculpture.

There are a number of items, said to be used by Emperor Shōmu in his daily life, which are preserved in the Shōsō-in Repository of Imperial Treasures in Nara, and which are useful for helping us to understand the relationship between Tempyō art and Chinese culture of the time. While some of these artifacts are of Chinese origin, many others were clearly made in Japan following the Chinese models, suggesting the extent to which the Japanese ruling class was attracted to Chinese culture. At the same time, the exquisite workmanship of these pieces speaks eloquently of the

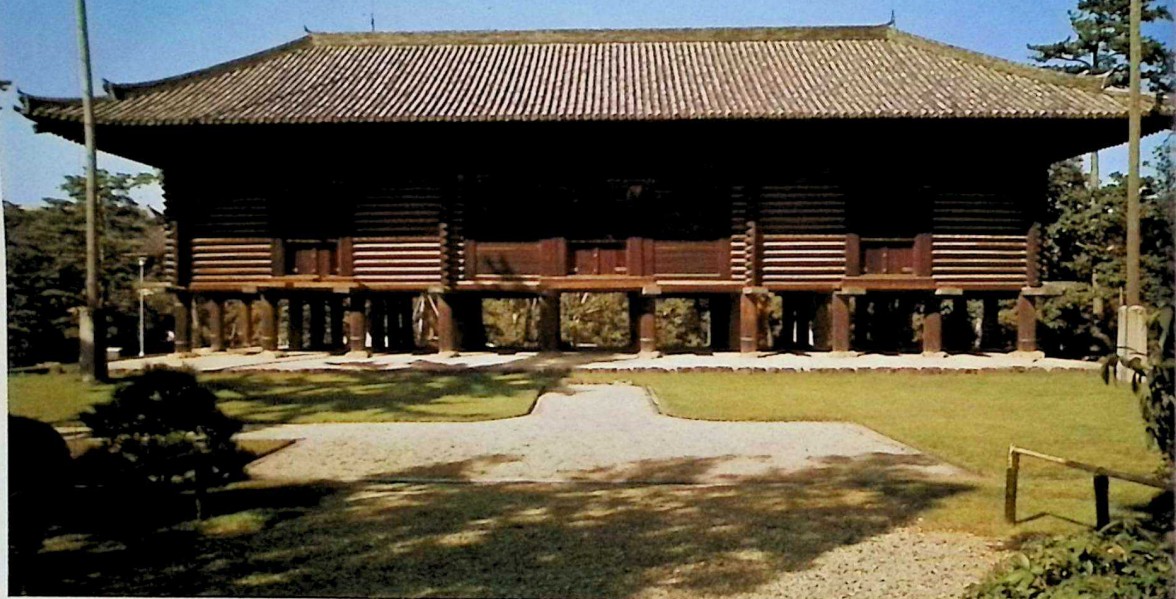
high degree of technical refinement that had been attained by the Japanese artists, as well as of the high standard of cultural life maintained by the aristocracy of the time.



11 Gakkō Bosatsu (Candraprabhā). Quiet, peaceful and graceful, this Buddhist statue is impressive with its immaculate beauty. Clay was one of the materials frequently used in the sculpture of the Nara Period.



12 *Lady under the Tree.* This is one panel of a folding-screen showing ladies under trees in T'ang-style Chinese costumes, portrayed in soft lines with graceful expressions. The panels were originally decorated with applied bird feathers.



13 Shōsō-in Repository of Imperial Treasures. This 8th century wooden building in the azekura (loghouse) style of construction has preserved numerous excellent works of Persian, Chinese and Japanese decorative arts through twelve centuries.



14 Main Hall of Tōshōdaiji Temple. This imposing building, representative of Nara Period architecture, houses important works of Buddhist sculpture of the time. One principal feature is the open colonnade on its façade.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIFE AT THE COURT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL CULTURE

ASSIMILATION OF BUDDHISM

The Heian Period, which followed the Nara Period, stretched over four centuries from the time of the establishment of the capital in Heian-kyō (present-day Kyoto) in the year 794 to the fall of the Taira Family (also known as the Heike) in 1185. Japanese culture during this period was in constant transition. The period taken as a whole, however, may be considered one during which the several components of cultural life were being molded into a distinctively Japanese form. In other words, it was a time of assimilation or “Japanization” of the imported Chinese culture.

Although early Heian society was still theoretically based on the legislative structure of its Chinese model, there were already beginning to appear trends in the political and social spheres which were distinct from those of the Nara Period.

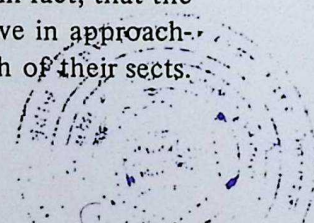
The privileged classes, i.e., the clergy and the aristocracy, did their utmost to acquire public tracts of land for their private holding. The ensuing increase of private land at the expense of the fast diminishing public land placed unbearable burdens on the common farming peasants, forcing them to give up their holdings to local landlords and become tenant farmers on the local

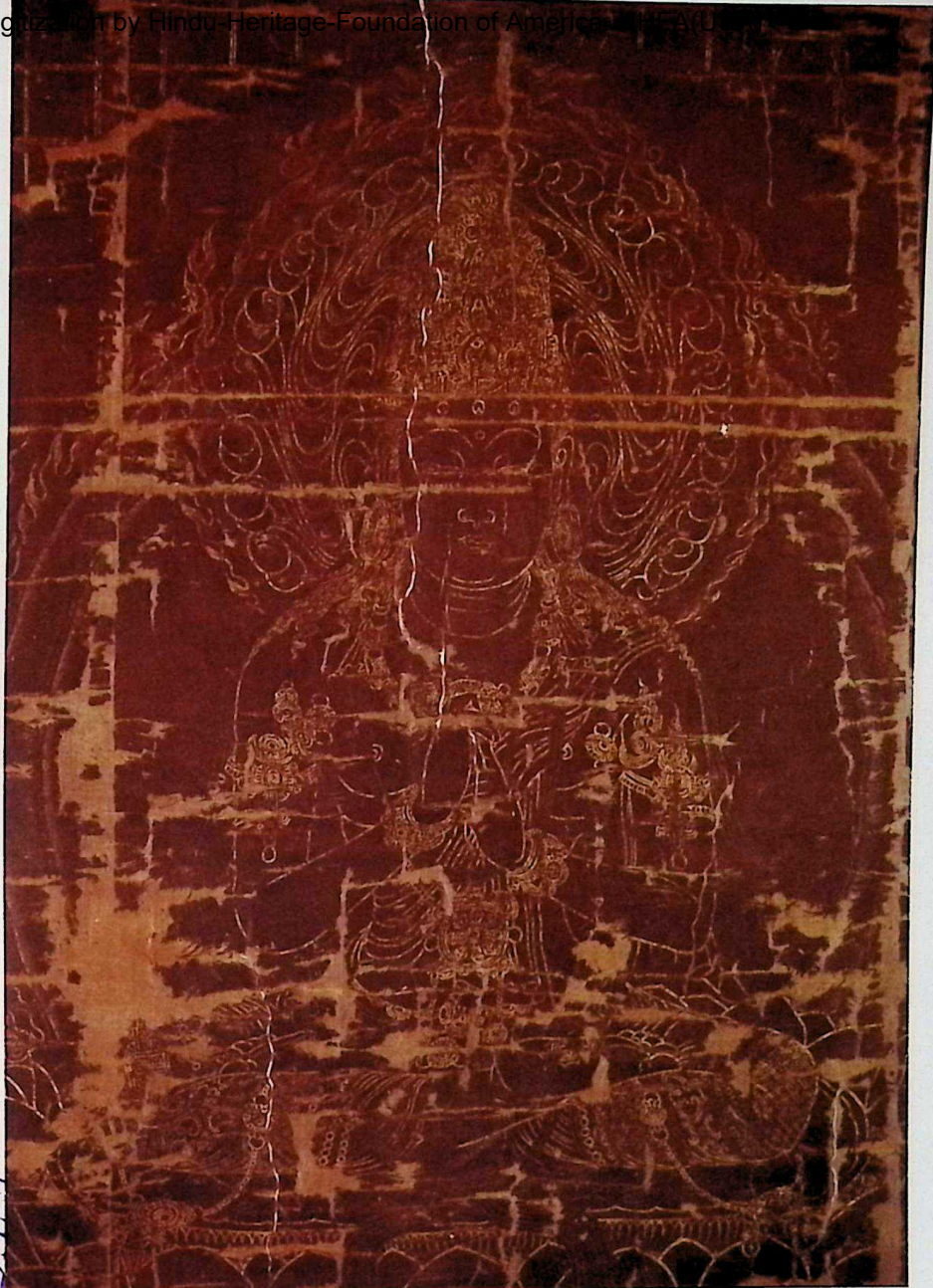
manor (*Shōen*), which flourished accordingly. The unwillingness of the populace to make the system work meant that public ownership of land was doomed to remain an ideal, a system in name only.

At the same time, an aristocratic dictatorship was beginning to take root under the powerful Fujiwara Family. The bureaucratic structure of the central government thus also effectively ceased functioning while the entire legislative structure was no more than a façade.

In the area of culture, too, the aristocracy was the dominant influence. Shortly after the change of the capital, two priests, Saichō and Kūkai, who had been studying in China, returned bringing with them the highly demanding metaphysical cults of Esoteric Buddhism. Saichō set up the Tendai Sect of Buddhism, while Kūkai founded the Shingon Sect, each of which began to take root as an ideologically and economically autonomous religious order though both were centered in the Buddhist concept of faith.

The nobility openly welcomed this new kind of Buddhism, not so much for its abstruse, solemn doctrine as for its prayers designed to gratify man's worldly desires. Esoteric Buddhism flourished during the early years of the Heian Period largely because of its capacity to please the Court nobles who were wont to exert themselves in the pursuit of worldly desires. Their insecurity stemmed from the fact that their desire for glory and prosperity was constantly frustrated in the reality of the ever-present scramble for power. They enthusiastically hailed this new cult as a way of achieving psychological security and deliverance from the exhausting struggle of life. There is even evidence, in fact, that the religious leaders themselves often took the initiative in approaching the aristocracy in order to promote the growth of their sects.





- 15 Takao Mandara. A mandara (mandala) is a graphic hierarchic chart of Buddhist divinities. This one, the earliest and most important example, is notable for its precise, balanced geometric layout.





16 Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaiṣajyaguru). Sharp eyes, full cheeks and an amply modeled body give this statue a mysterious vigor characteristic of Early Heian sculpture.

Given the success of these new religions, it was natural that Buddhist art should begin to be dominated by Esoteric Buddhism. And, indeed, the artistic achievements of this period show markedly mystical characteristics which are nowhere to be observed in earlier Buddhist art.

In the history of art, this period is known as the Jōgan Period, most noted for its religious paintings of *Mandala* (Buddhist pantheon; schematic pictorial diagram of Buddhist divinities) which communicated Buddhist precepts through the medium of painting, and for effigies of individual deities, which were used at exorcising rituals. The Ryokai Mandala, which still exists in the Jingoji Temple, is noteworthy for its flowing grace achieved with bold thin lines. The effigies are characterized by their precision and technique of producing a cubic effect with lines alone, making them masterpieces of "linear art."

Sculpture at this time was done chiefly in wood. A statue would be carved out of a single large block. The sharp, powerful chisel work was most appropriate to the spirit of Esoteric Buddhism. Two outstanding examples are the Yakushi Nyorai in the Jingoji Temple and the Nyoirin Kannon in the Kanshinji Temple.

In general, Esoteric Buddhist painting and sculpture are highly mystical in nature, suggesting the presence of a latent pulsating spiritual force. They may be said to produce an effect of awesome dignity.

BLOSSOMING OF THE NATIONAL CULTURE

The Heian Period reached its maturity in the tenth century, and Japanese culture also showed signs of a more distinctively Japanese character. Two key factors behind this development were undoubtedly the suspension of official interchange with the Conti-

ment in the latter part of the ninth century and the development of the *kana* syllabary.

In the field of politics, the Fujiwara Family continued to exercise a complete dictatorship through its monopoly of the positions of *Sesshō* (Regent) and *Kampaku* (Chief Adviser to the Emperor). By now, the Court had virtually been turned into a stage for the performance of public ceremonies and rituals.

The courtiers, their material welfare assured by the revenues from their ever-flourishing manors, lived lives of extravagance and leisure. With the exception of middle- and lower-level officials serving in the provinces, the majority of the nobles were well entrenched as a privileged leisured class in the capital. Their time was spent in appreciating art, poetry and the beauty of nature, as well as in cultivating relationships with court ladies and seeking to improve their status at Court. These privileged people thus developed a highly refined culture, as we know from such masterpieces as the renowned *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji), Buddhist paintings, and the *Yamato-e* (Japanese-style painting), which portrayed a uniquely Japanese aesthetic world.

This aristocratic culture, however, was narrowly limited in its vision. Socially and economically it was more a burden than a benefit to the nation. This circumstance was probably unavoidable, given the historical circumstances of the time: internationally, Japan was cut off from all direct external influences, while domestically, the aristocracy constituted a self-contained class unit out of contact with the lives of the ordinary people. It was those nobles, however, who, through this type of leisurely secluded existence, realized the cultural potential of Japan, and through their efforts liberated the national culture from Continental influence. It was they who gave to Japanese culture its unique gracefulness and sensuality.

The native culture blossomed forth first in the field of literature, and this development stems principally from the invention of the *kana* syllabary; for it was this which enabled the Japanese to give a fuller and more accurate expression to their feelings and thoughts than had been possible in Chinese. *Waka*, the classical Japanese poetic form, quickly became the most appropriate medium of expression for the refined aristocratic sensitivity and perceptivity. At the same time, there was a growing diversification of activities within the aristocratic class, and some soon felt their expression restricted by the *waka* form. This gave rise to a new form of native prose narrative.

Examples of the literary narrative include *Taketori Monogatari* and *Utsuho Monogatari*, although the most outstanding work is without question *Genji Monogatari* by the Court lady Murasaki Shikibu. Grand in conception and graceful in expression, this work details the magnificence and the glory surrounding the love affairs of the world of the aristocracy. Beneath the narration of events is Lady Murasaki's deeply religious philosophy of life based on the awareness of the transitoriness of life. The emotional state associated with this concept is described as *mono no aware* (pathos of nature).

The phenomenon of cultural transition in Japan at this time is also evident in architectural styles, particularly a new one known as *shinden-zukuri*, a style of dwelling architecture which was popular among the nobility for its natural and harmonious appearance. The style featured spacious gardens arranged in imitation of scenery, and buildings roofed with thin layers of bark of Japanese cypress. On the screens and partitions within the buildings would be works by the best painters depicting Japanese landscapes during the various seasons.

At this time there was also considerable artistic experimenta-

tion in search of an appropriate technique for painting native Japanese subjects. The result of that search was the *Yamato-e*, a purely native Japanese style.

Certain gardens of the period are still preserved, such as the gardens of the Sento Gosho in Kyoto and of the Motsuji Temple in Iwate. In architecture, the Kyoto Gosho (the Imperial Palace of Kyoto) and the Hō-ō-dō (Phoenix Hall) of the Byōdō-in Temple in Uji both contain the characteristic elements of Heian building.

RISE OF THE JŌDO SECT OF BUDDHISM

In the later Heian Period, as Esoteric Buddhism continued to grow in influence as the religion of the aristocracy, there arose a new distinctively popular cult. The Jōdo cult, as it was called, taught that one could hope to be reborn in Paradise by calling on Amida Buddha (*Amitabha*), through the recitation of the Nembutsu, a simple formula, and that while this present world had to be recognized as devoid of hope for man, there was the possibility of salvation in the next life. The eschatological nature of this religion contrasted sharply with that of Esoteric Buddhism which promised gratification of desires in this world.

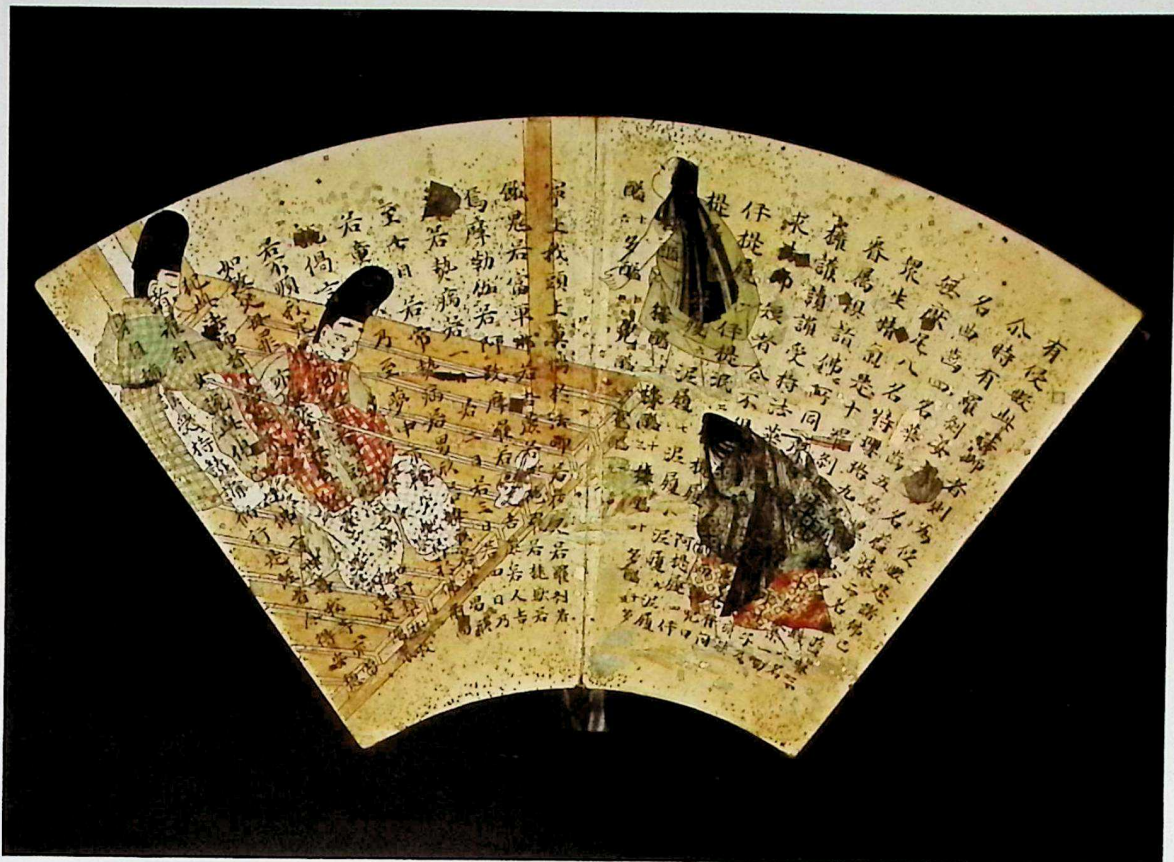
The Jōdo cult also gradually began to penetrate the aristocratic class, which found the new religion's promise of happiness in the afterlife an attractive one. The aristocratic devotees in the new faith erected magnificent shrines (*Amida-dō*) to Amida Buddha in which they employed the most advanced architectural and artistic techniques. Comparatively small in scale, the shrines were designed with sufficient space for the faithful to walk around the reposed image of Amida Buddha. A simple exterior would often contrast with a highly ornate and colorful interior. Among the main surviving structures of this kind are the Amida-dō of the



17 Amida Nyorai (Amitābha). By Jōchō. It was a cherished desire of Late Heian nobles to be received into Paradise by such a tender, merciful Buddha as this. The statue represents what they had in mind as the ideal type of religious sculpture.



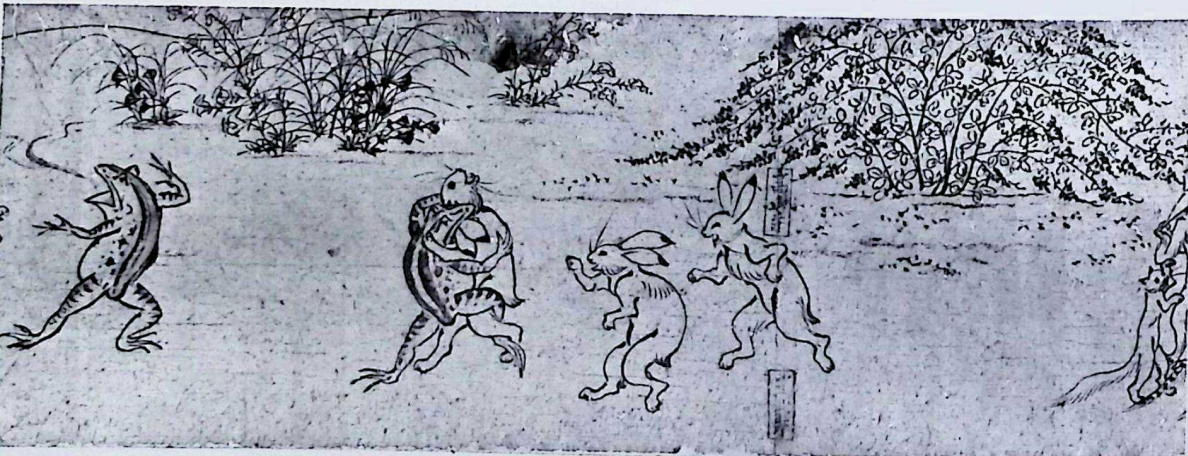
18 *Amida-dō (popularly known as Phoenix Hall) of Byōdō-in Temple. This luxuriously decorated building, symbolizing a palace in the Buddhist Paradise, was built by a nobleman who wished to be reborn in Paradise.*



19 Fan-shaped Hoke-kyō Sutra. Copying the sutras (Buddhist scriptures) by hand was believed to be one of the means for attaining rebirth in Paradise. This is an example of decorated sutras copied on fan-shaped sheets of paper.



20 *Illustrated Scroll of Genji Monogatari. Emaki (narrative picture scrolls) presenting literary romances in writing and painting together were embodiments of what ladies of the aristocratic age longed for.*



21 *Scroll of animal caricatures. Animals simulating humans were presented as satires on the society of the time. The portrayal is rich in movement and humor.*

Byōdō-in Temple in Kyoto and the Konjiki-dō of the Chūsonji Temple in Hiraizumi.

The sculpture of the later Heian Period, noted for its aristocratic grace and sensuality, achieved a degree of refinement marking the culmination of its Japanese form. During this period, the earlier technique of carving a statue out of a single block of wood gave way to a new technique (*yosegi-zukuri*) of assembling a number of wooden blocks, resulting probably in a division of labor and mass production. The statue of Amida Buddha by the famous artist Jōchō, which is preserved in the Hō-ō-dō of the Byōdō-in Temple, is the finest masterpiece remaining today. Considered a model by later sculptors, its beauty and harmonious form made it the ideal object for meditation of aristocrats seeking rebirth in the Jōdo paradise.

With the rise of this new Jōdo cult, a new trend appeared in the field of religious painting, typified by the *Raigō-zu* (Scenes of the Descent of Buddha), depicting scenes in which Amida Buddha descends from Heaven to welcome the faithful.

THE WORLD OF *EMAKI*

Emaki are Yamato-e paintings on hand scrolls. The scroll medium is used to maximum advantage by representing movement and action through a succession of scenes. The effect is not unlike that of a film strip. This type of painting was probably native to Japan, developing in response to a demand for pictorial representation of works of literary narrative. *Emaki* usually illustrate with text (*kotoba-gaki*) romance stories, legendary tales, biographies, or stories about the origin and history of Buddhist or Shinto temples.

The great majority of *emaki* scrolls deal with historical stories

or legendary tales. The subjects are usually either tragic or comic representations of love affairs, wars, faith, miracles, or mystical or grotesque happenings. The paintings are often in rich bright colors, often in powerful drawing. Some of the representative masterpieces are *Genji Monogatari Emaki*, *Shigisan Engi*, *Bandainagon Ekotoba* and *Chōjū Giga*.

Though produced and enjoyed by members of the aristocratic class, these paintings included scenes of commoner life as well. The image of the period left to us today, however, tends to be one of the nobility unrolling these scrolls and immersing themselves in a world of romance composed of both imaginary and real elements.

Thus Japan passed into its medieval age.

CHAPTER FIVE

RISE OF THE WARRIOR CLASS AND THE MEDIEVAL CULTURE

ESTABLISHMENT OF A SHOGUNATE

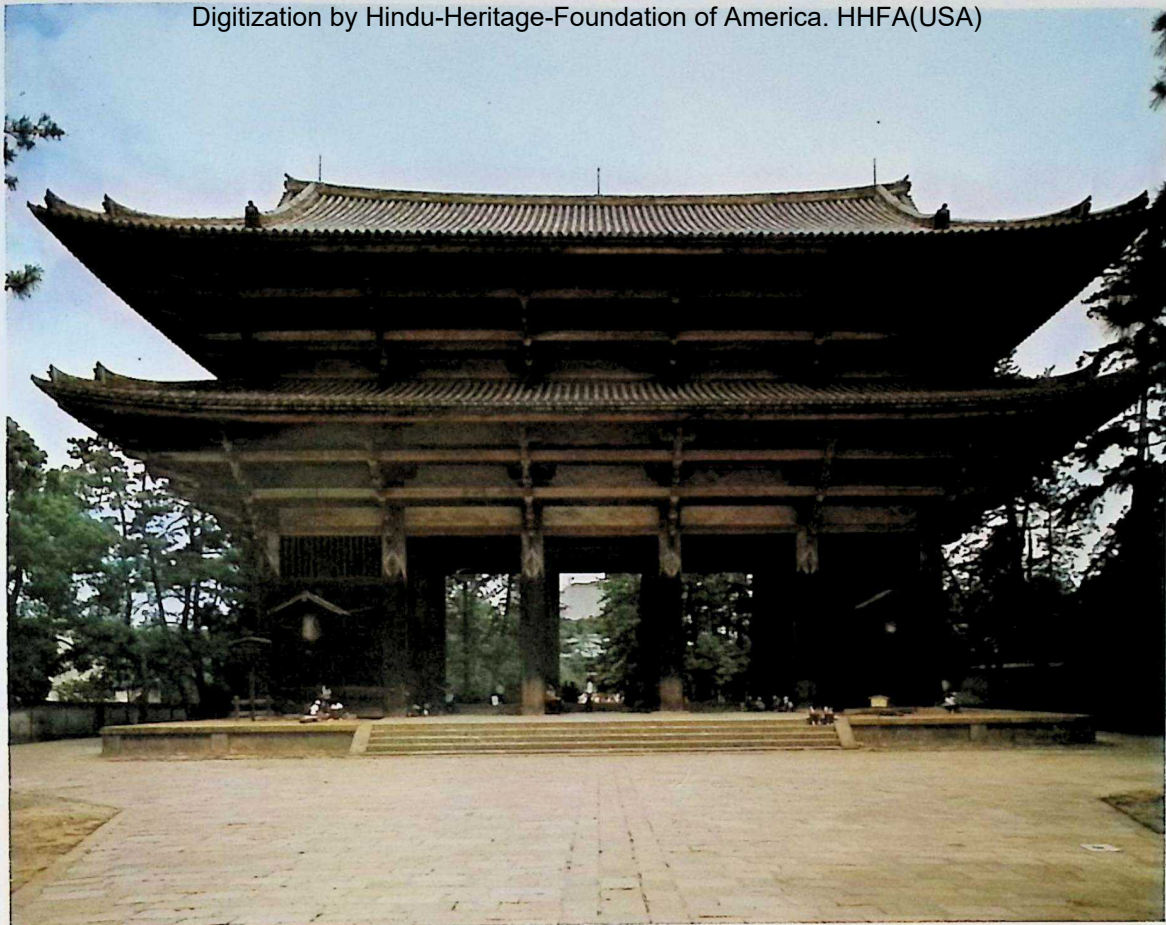
The ruling class of aristocrats, whose power and legitimacy derived from their proximity to the Emperor, found their economic bases of support gradually shifting to a newly-arising class of warriors evolving from wealthy farmers and aristocrats who had settled in the provinces and who had developed sound bases of power through agricultural management. Deriving strength from ties they formed with the lower strata of society in the form of feudal lord-vassal contracts, the latter eventually toppled the traditional ruling class and established a new feudal society. The medieval age of Japan, which begins at this point, spanned about four centuries, including both the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, the former of which lasted approximately a century and a half from the founding of the Kamakura Shogunate at the end of the twelfth century until its collapse in 1333.

In the Heian Period, warriors had to at least nominally appear subordinate to the nobility. Furthermore, warrior leaders had to be of noble descent, from either the Taira or the Minamoto families. In the provinces, however, this nominal state of affairs was being rapidly eroded by the shifting of actual power to the

warriors themselves. It was the civil wars of the Hogen (1156) and Heiji eras (1159) which first opened the way for the warriors to penetrate the central government.

Taira-no-Kiyomori, the victor in these struggles, was the first to establish a truly military governing power. The Taira Family, however, after winning power, fell victim to the same weaknesses of the old aristocratic government, and was in turn overthrown by the Minamoto Family. Minamoto-no-Yoritomo established his Shogunate in the town of Kamakura in 1185, and saw to it that the basis for military government was secure. The center of government thus moved to Kamakura, but the cultural center remained in Kyoto with the Imperial Family, where culture continued to be the prerogative of the nobility. However, a social transformation of this scale could not fail to bring great changes to the ideas and consciousness of the nation. Gradually, there was a shift away from the delicate, graceful and feminine sensitivity of the aristocracy. The new trend was in the direction of an appreciation of the down-to-earth, the unpretentious, and the powerful. The new spirit of simplicity and virility manifested itself in the reconstruction of the Tōdaiji and Kōfukuji temples which had been burnt down during the wars (in 1180). The Hall of the Great Buddha at Tōdaiji, the greatest feat of construction of the time, reached completion in 1195 after a period of 20 years. All the sculptors of Buddhist works living in Nara and Kyoto were summoned to work on the project. Their solid and forceful designs, known as *Daibutsu-yō* or the Great Buddha style, gave the completed hall a heroic quality.

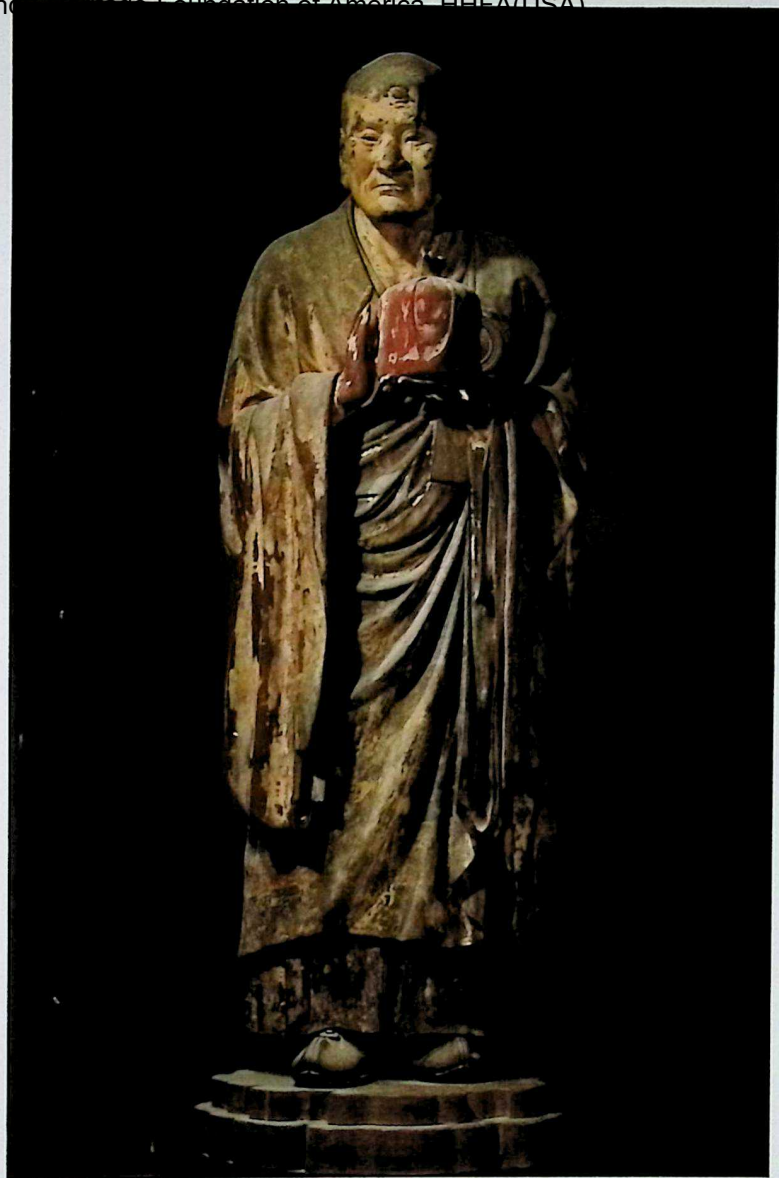
Living in Nara at this time were three of the greatest masters of Buddhist sculpture, Unkei, Kaikei and Tankei. Enjoying a degree of artistic freedom, each of them was able to absorb the spirit of the new age and reflect it in his individual characteristic



22 Nandaimon Gateway of Tōdaiji Temple. This South (front) Main Gateway is a magnificent wooden structure of a distinctive architectural style, notable especially for the unique device used to support the enormous weight of its roof.



23 Kongō Rikishi (Vajravīra). By Unkei and Kaikei. The colossal wooden statues guarding the entrance of Tōdaiji Temple show powerful dynamic poses. They are representative masterpieces of realistic Kamakura Period sculpture.



24 *Mujaku Bosatsu (Asanga). By Unkei.*
The lofty personality of the 5th-century prelate is vividly portrayed in this statue featuring gentle, realistic representation.



25 Red-laced armor, with helmet and shoulder-pieces. Armor was made in quantity in the Kamakura Period. They demonstrate the highly developed techniques of the decorative arts at the time.

style. Unkei's first representative work was the statue of Dainichi Nyorai at Enjōji, which he did in 1176. After this success, Unkei and his disciples produced the statues of Niwo at the Nandaimon (South Great Gate) of Tōdaiji and of Mujaku and Seshin at Kōfukuji. These, along with numerous other masterpieces, contributed to the establishment of a unique, powerful Unkei Style, based on definite realistic principles. Of the many well-known works left to us by Kaikei, we might mention his rendering of the Miroku Bosatsu (now at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in the United States), his statue of the Shinto god Hachiman in the guise of a Buddhist monk, and a Jizō Bosatsu at Tōdaiji. These reflect Kaikei's concern for delicacy and gentleness, which he achieved through a balance of realistic and formal beauty.

POPULARITY OF PORTRAITS AND PICTURE SCROLLS

The trend toward realism in the Kamakura era was reflected in various aspects of society. It gave rise to what might be termed an explanatory or descriptive culture. In literature, this tendency took the form of the narrative, and in art it appeared in portrait paintings and picture scrolls. The distinctive feature of the portrait painting of this period was its emphasis on individuality and realistic detail, with a special importance attached to the depiction of faces. The origin of this development in portraiture may be found in the formation of the feudal society itself. The Kamakura Shogunate was based on ties of mutual loyalty existing between lords and vassals. In contrast to traditional rigid class stratification and subordination, people were increasingly developing an awareness of themselves as human beings, and concomitantly there was more of a concern with and interest in fellow human beings. The development of portrait painting may be seen as an expression of

the fulfillment of these needs and desires.

The development of picture scrolls depended on the availability of a wider range of people who could enjoy them. The rapid growth in popularity of these scrolls certainly owed much to the fact they could be enjoyed by even illiterates.

The picture scrolls of the Kamakura Period showed more variety than their predecessors, which were predominantly concerned with narrative stories. Now religion and war became frequent subject matters for this form of art. Both the number and kinds of picture scrolls increased. The new Buddhist sects appearing at this time would illustrate the history of a temple or shrine, or the biography of the founder of the sect, as a part of their religious proselytizing activities. The warrior class, for its part, would make use of scrolls to affirm the warrior spirit. Factors such as these, then, help to explain the explanatory and epic quality of the scrolls, as well as the individuality that characterizes some of the figures in the scrolls. There are numerous extant examples of the fine religious work done at this time: e.g., *Kokawadera Engi*, *Taima Mandara Engi*, *Kegon Engi*, and *Ippen Shōnin E-den*.

Of particular importance in the development of religious picture scrolls were the new Buddhist sects such as the Jōdo and Hokke (or Nichiren). These sects appeared amidst the conditions of social turmoil prevailing at the beginning of the Kamakura Period. In contrast to the older Buddhism of the Heian era, which tended to be scholastic and aristocratic in addition to being both a state and prayer-oriented religion, these new sects provided a new theoretical foundation for faith.

It is clear from the fact that Buddhism is a religion founded by Prince Shiddhartha (Shakya) who renounced temporal power that this religion is one transcending the power of the State. Indeed, Buddhism is a universal religion which promises salvation



26 Portrait of Minamoto-no-Yoritomo. Attributed to Fujiwara Takano. Yoritomo was the founder of the Kamakura Shogunate government and virtual ruler of Japan in the early 13th century.



27 *Ippen Shōnin E-den* (illustrated biography of Priest Ippen). By En-i. Various new sects of Buddhism appeared during the Kamakura Period. Portraits and illustrated biographies of their founders were painted frequently to lead the public into the faith.

to all of mankind. It is also noteworthy that the leading Buddhists of this period in Japan, Hōnen and Shinran, saw fit to sever all ties with the State and to assert the independence of their religion. The period gave birth to many new sects, all of them popular in their orientation, and sharing the characteristics of being practical and individualistic. The rise of these new sects and their activities also acted as a strong impetus to the old Buddhist sects as well as to the native Shinto religion. The result was a restoration movement among the old Buddhist sects and a flurry of activity on the part of Shinto shrines.

In spite of the fact that Japan had no formal relationship with the Sung Dynasty which ruled China at that time, exchanges between the two countries flourished, in part as a result of the efforts by Taira-no-Kiyomori to increase trade between Japan and China. Not a few Japanese monks went to China and returned after studying Zen Buddhism there. Of these, the two most famous names associated with the introduction of Zen to Japan are Eisai, who established the Rinzai Sect of Zen, and Dōgen, who founded the Sōdō Sect. The presence of Zen, with its teaching that only by renouncing everything and concentrating all one's efforts on *Zazen* or meditation can one attain spiritual enlightenment, was to be of great importance in succeeding years.

ZEN BUDDHISM AND WARRIOR CULTURE

The warrior class, which strengthened its power remarkably after the civil strife between the Northern and Southern Courts, began to contribute its own innovations to the essentially aristocratic culture. The influence of Zen Buddhism also contributed to the developing warrior culture, which reached its peak during the Muromachi Period (lasting from the collapse of the Kamakura

Shogunate in 1333 to the end of the Muromachi Shogunate in 1573), during which time the center of government was moved back to Kyoto.

Zen Buddhism differed from other Buddhist sects in its emphasis on individual training and discipline. The art of the Sung and Yüan dynasties, which Zen monks brought into Japan along with the religion, was more oriented toward appreciation than worship. These new features associated with Zen were easily adopted by the warrior culture.

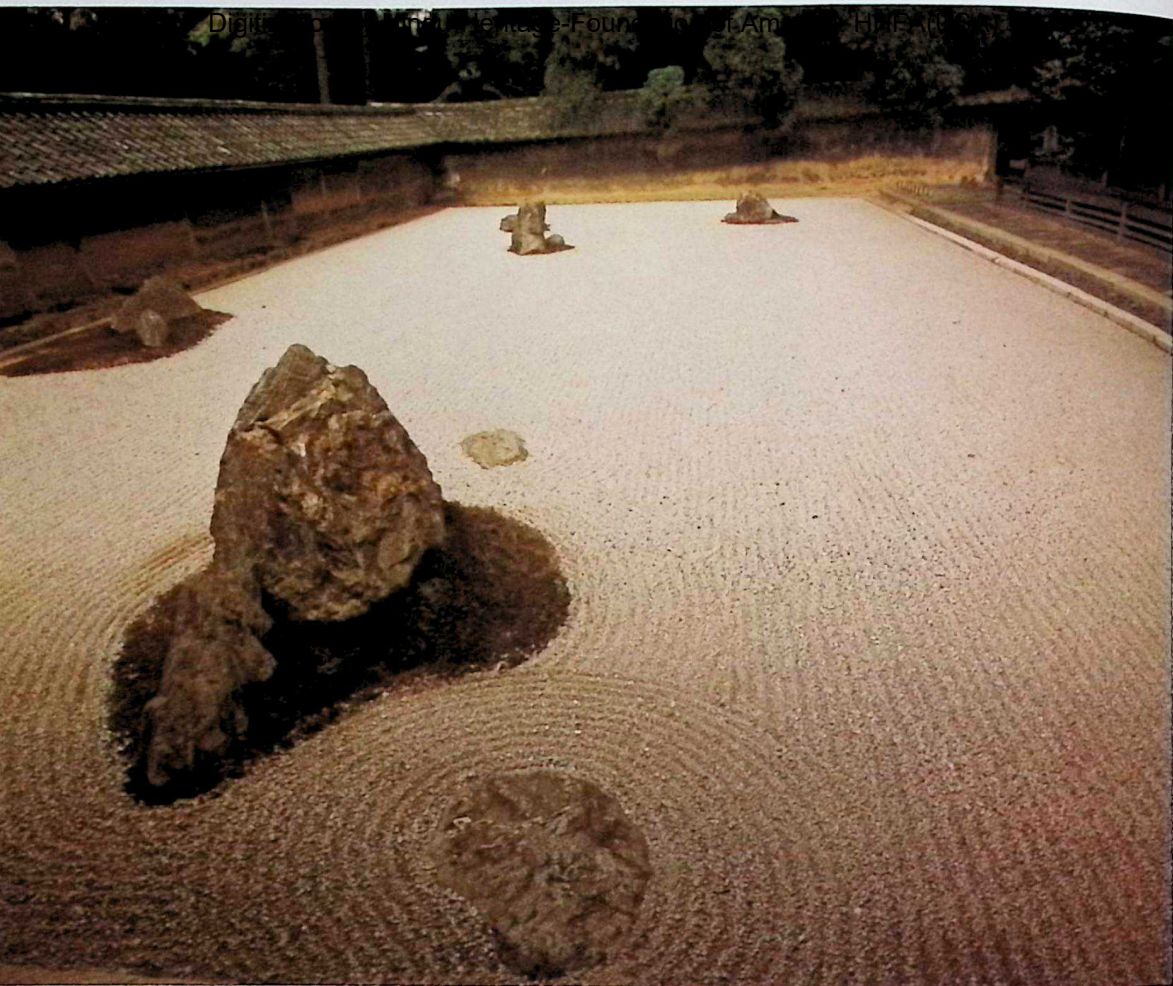
Zen Buddhism enjoyed the patronage of the Ashikaga Shogun and the ruling class. The sect established the system of *Gozan Jissatsu*, according to which five temples of primary importance and ten temples of secondary importance were designated. Zen monks of these five temples acted as political advisors to the Muromachi Shogunate, not only participating in politics, foreign affairs and trade but also playing a leading role in the fields of art and learning. The flourishing of "Gozan literature," which essentially consisted of pedantic intellectual games played by the Zen monks, may be said to be one indication of the secularization of the Zen culture. Another indication of the tendency to secularization was strongly manifested in architecture. The *toko* (alcove), *tana* (shelved alcove adjoining the *toko*), and *shoin* (desk-window) which are still considered as basic fixtures of Japanese houses, are features of the Shoin style of architecture, which made its appearance at the end of the Muromachi era and derived from the style of monks' study rooms.

ZEN AND NATURE

The characteristic painting at this time was of course that done in India ink, i.e., what was known as *suiboku-ga*, which



28 Autumn and Winter Landscapes: Winter. By Sesshū (1420–1506).
The art of landscape painting, which developed along with Zen
Buddhism, was brought to perfection by the Zen priest Sesshū.



29 Garden of Ryōanji Temple. The Zen (meditative, intuitional Buddhism) view of nature was the source of this abstract "dry landscape" garden consisting solely of rocks and white sand.

formed a vital part of Zen culture. While it was emotional appeal and color which were the life and soul of the Yamato-e style of painting, suiboku-ga monochrome black painting was typically abstract and suggestive. Zen highly evaluated *sansui-ga* or landscape painting for the possibility of the spiritual contact with nature it provided. Monks themselves took up painting as a spiritual avocation, and some of them became skilled professional artists (known as priest-painters).

Two artists who started as monks were Josetsu, who painted the *Hyōnen-zu* (Trying to Catch a Catfish with a Gourd), and Shūbun, who refined and perfected the Japanese style of *sansui-ga*. Although these two were masters in their own right, it was Sesshū, after his return from Ming China in 1469, who produced the first original Japanese masterpiece of landscape painting in ink. Sesshū did not belong to the painting circle of the capital but lived in the remote countryside, mixing with people from all walks of life, and devoting himself to painting suiboku-ga truly reflective of the Japanese spirit. His representative works are *Amanohashidate-zu*, *Sansui Chōkan* (Landscapes of the Four Seasons), *Shūtō Sansui-zu* (Autumn and Winter Landscapes) and *Haboku Sansui-zu* (Landscapes).

Since ancient times, the Japanese have had a preference for man-made gardens which imitated nature. The love of nature upheld by Zen surely contributed to this, for a number of Zen monks, including Musō Kokushi, became experts in the art of landscape gardening. These monks developed a new style of gardening, compressing the vastness of nature into confined spaces and representing nature in a symbolic manner. A limited number of trees and rocks were sufficient to suggest all of nature itself, not unlike the monochrome landscape painting the same monks so appreciated. The garden of Saihōji is a good example. There also

appeared gardens which expressed the great expanse of nature by rocks and sand alone. Called rock gardens or *kare sansui* (dry landscape), examples may be seen at Daisen-in in Daitokuji and at Ryōanji.

CHAPTER SIX

ART AND JAPANESE SENSITIVITY IN THE PRE-MODERN AGE

CASTLE TOWN CULTURE AND CASTLES

After the Ōnin Rebellion of 1467, Japan entered its Period of Civil Wars. Various daimyo or feudal lords established fiefs which were in fact independent political entities. In place of the old estate system, they formed feudal organizations in which the daimyo directly governed his domain and the people living in it. The daimyo of the Period of Civil Wars were mostly parvenus of formerly powerful provincial families. Japan's Pre-modern Age may be said to begin when the three heroes, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, successively established a united rule over these numerous daimyo and their allies. In terms of art, the Pre-modern Age in Japan includes both the Momoyama and Edo periods. The Momoyama Period, which was the beginning of the Pre-modern Age, is the period subsequent to the unification of the country by Oda Nobunaga in 1573, which marked the downfall of the Muromachi Shogunate, until the fall of the Toyotomi Family in 1615.

In this period, along with the attendant political stabilization, there was industrial growth and economic development, factors which were directly reflected in the culture. Old forms were

destroyed and people developed new forces which produced real, positive and fresh cultural phenomena. The broad-minded spirit of the new rulers was also reflected in the unprecedented splendence of the age. Japanese creativity began to play a role in new areas of life. Contact with the West, which had been almost non-existent, also increased, bringing about further changes in the lives of the people. For the first time, Japanese became aware of Japan's location on the terrestrial globe and the world map, and began to broaden their outlook on the world. Their sense of wonder and mystery was stimulated by the material culture of the West including firearms as well as the spiritual culture of Christianity with its faith in one absolute God.

The maturing of feudal society and development of urban commerce saw the emergence of wealthy merchants with enormous financial power. While the warrior leaders tried to control the movements of these merchants in the cities under their control, the merchants in turn were able to continue to increase their influence through close relationships with the feudal leaders. Under this special system, the castle and the town around it fostered a vigorous and richly creative culture against the background of overseas trade and urban commerce.

In establishing a fief, a daimyo would construct a semipermanent castle in the center of his fief on flat land where traffic was easier, and build a town around the castle. A castle was a natural military facility, but during the long civil wars and with the introduction of firearms, the feudal lords had made castles more militarily sophisticated and larger in scale than ever before. The castles also served as a display of a feudal lord's power; this function, however, required the building of donjons rising well above ground level. The Japanese donjon (*tenshukaku*) was a unique multi-storied building invented by Japanese creativity. As a



30 Main Donjon of Himeji Castle. Popularly known as the White Heron Castle, Himeji Castle with its white-washed buildings is the most beautiful example of Japanese castle architecture.



31 Cypress tree. Attributed to Kanō Eitoku (1543–1590). The interiors of magnificent castles and temples in the elegant Momoyama Period were decorated with bright wall paintings, sliding doors and folding-screens.

symbol of a leader's power, a castle would not only be equipped with a donjon, but would also become a veritable center for plastic arts such as architecture, sculpture, industrial arts, painting and gardening, all contributing aesthetically to the whole. The castle thus often lost its military character in favor of a more political and spiritual one.

Azuchi Castle was such a structure. Built by the order of Oda Nobunaga in 1576, it was a grand palace where all varieties of the plastic arts combined to produce a display of military, financial, and political might. The donjon was said to have had as many as seven stories. The high-rise style of Azuchi Castle was taken over by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who extended it to Osaka Castle, the Jurakudai Palace, and Fushimi Castle in Kyoto. The period was a golden age for castle building. Himeji Castle, built by Ikeda Terumasa and finished in 1609, is representative of the era. Its donjon is still intact.

When a warrior lord built such a castle or a great residence, he desired large paintings to decorate the interior and commissioned artists to decorate the movable sliding screens, wood-panel doors, folding screens, and wall coverings. These paintings are called *shōheki-ga* (partition paintings). The Kanō School of artists was most famous for their style incorporating rich color and strong bold lines. They attempted to combine the color of Yamato-e with the composition style of *suiboku-ga*. It was around this time that new vigor and freshness was injected into what had become a lackluster formality. The Kanō School frequently painted magnificent flowers and birds, which they drew with strong lines in India ink and then painted with gorgeous colors. Their large-scale composition was new to Japanese painting, which until then had prized simple elegance and delicacy. The decorative paintings in Azuchi Castle, Osaka Castle, and the Jurakudai Palace

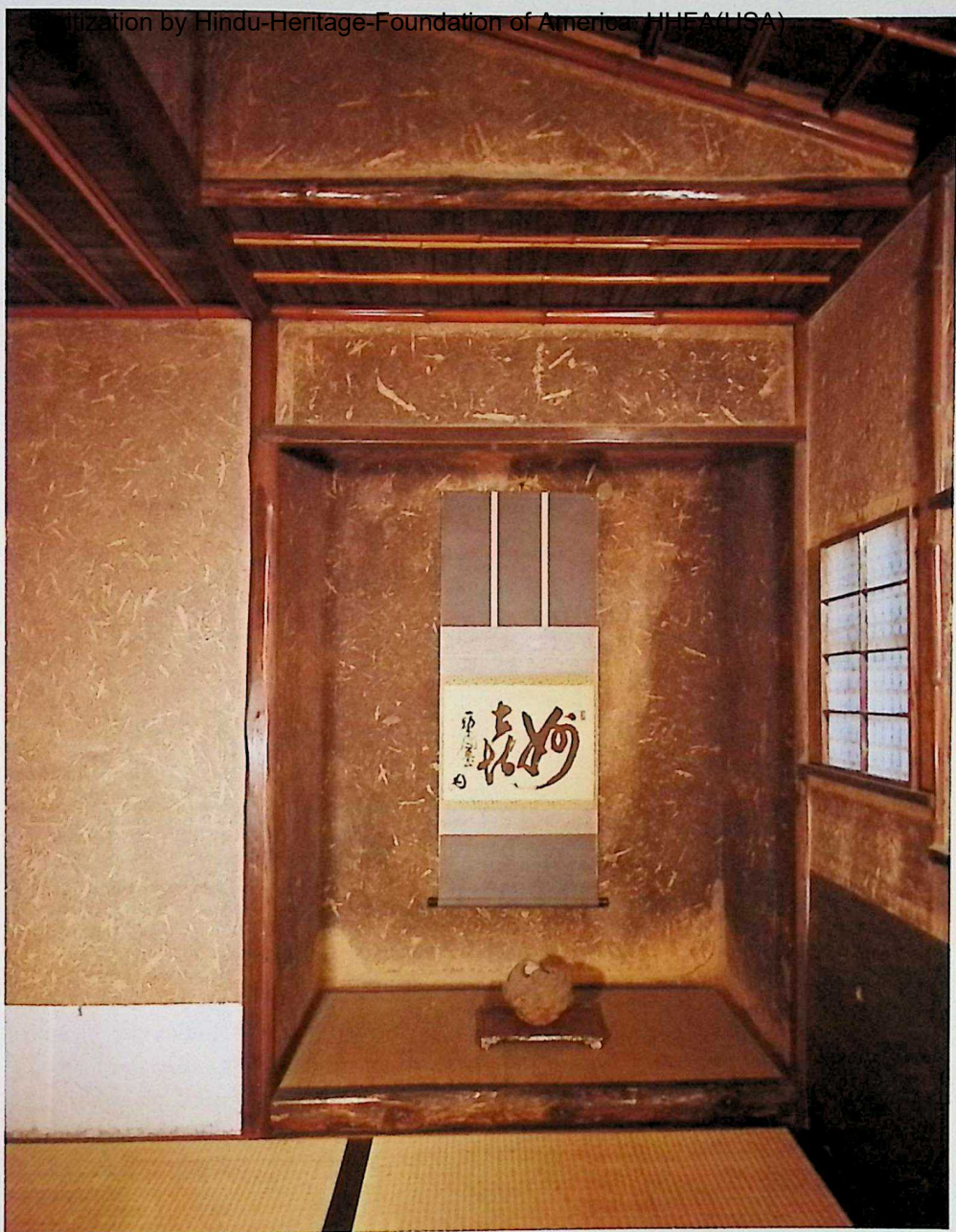
are attributed to the most skilled artist of the time, Kanō Eitoku; in fact, they are group efforts of Kanō's disciples under his direction. The wall paintings at Chishakuin Temple and the folding screen *Pine Trees* by Hasegawa Tōhaku are also masterpieces of this period.

TWO REFLECTIONS OF JAPANESE CULTURE – THE TEA CEREMONY AND FLOWER ARRANGEMENT

Tea was introduced to Japan in the Kamakura Period by Buddhist monks as a medicinal drink. The tea ceremony which evolved around it, however, is something unique to Japan. It was devised by Murata Jukō who served the Shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimasa (died 1490). Jukō was a believer in leading the life of a recluse in harmony with nature and natural phenomena.

In the Muromachi Period, warrior lords and wealthy merchants, when meeting for political or commercial discussions, would often use the occasion to serve tea. It was considered a refined pleasure to sit leisurely in a quiet tea room separated from the worries of life outside, and listen to the sound of water boiling on the hearth. It was Sen-no-Rikyū, a citizen of Sakai and a disciple of Takeno Jōō, who heightened tea drinking to the level of an art. It should be noted, however, that he was able to develop the art of the tea ceremony as he did in part because of the above social background.

The tea ceremony has two notable features developed under the patronage of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and reflective of his own life and character. Hideyoshi's conquering of the nation constituted the subjugation of both the old central government and its art by a provincial and agricultural power. Thus, the gorgeous palaces resplendent with gold and the decor of the tea room which



32 Interior of the tea ceremony room, Tai-an. Quietude and absence of ornament are among the essentials of the tea ceremony. Though simple in appearance, this tea ceremony room is designed with thorough care given to every detail.



33 *Shoin (study and guest room) of Katsura Imperial Villa. The shoin style is the fundamental source of present-day Japanese residential architecture. It features rationalistic design eliminating extraneous space and materials.*

suggests a humble thatched farm house are at the same time heterogeneous and yet two sides of the same coin. Warlords and wealthy merchants displayed magnificence and splendor on the outside, but within their hearts wished to live in an atmosphere of calm and meditation. If the soul of the tea ceremony can be said to lie in "a moment of relief snatched from the pressure of work," or in the harmony of centrifugal and centripetal forces, the tea room then was a place where peace, trust and friendship reigned.

A tea room designed by Sen-no-Rikyū would at first glance seem quite plain and even too small, but yet it was actually planned with the most careful and thorough deliberation, even to the tiniest detail. It was furnished with sliding doors covered with snow-white translucent Japanese paper. The pillars were for the most part of wood retaining its natural bark. The ceiling was done in bamboo or reed, and the bare texture of the walls was highly valued. In order to create the effect of a hermit's cottage in the tea room, all useless decoration and external ornamentation were done away with. To give a sense of *wabi* (quiet taste) and *shibumi* (sobriety), hedges, stepping stones, a hand-washing basin, and stone lanterns were placed along the narrow path leading to the room. One would prepare one's spirit for entering the tea room by stepping along this linear path. The room itself was a space where the spirit would be filled. The Tai-an in the Myōkian at Yamazaki is a good example of the ideals of Rikyū.

Pottery was produced at various localities, notably in the area of Seto. Seto ware was a product of the strong influence of Sung dynasty porcelain. Spurred by the popularity of the tea ceremony, production of tea utensils was started on a large scale, especially in the district of Mino. The representative types are *Seto guro* (or Seto black), *Shino*, *Kiseto* (or yellow Seto), and *Oribe* wares. Their designs and forms are magnificently sophisticated and

varied; and the technical advance they represented was remarkable. It was in Kyoto under the direction of Sen-no-Rikyū that Chōjirō developed a new art of pottery-making. He developed an original Japanese tea bowl, the *Raku chawan*, whose form is quite different from that of the traditional Chinese bowls (*Tenmoku chawan*) and Korean bowls (*Korai chawan*).

The art of flower arrangement also began to flourish at this time. There was already a tradition of arranging flowers in vases, but now flowers began to be arranged so as to heighten the appreciation of the vases. It was Ikenobō Senkei who introduced flower arrangement into the tea room. The Ikenobō School gained the overwhelming support of the masses and became the representative school of this art. As might be expected, tea room flower decoration should not seek to produce an effect of elegant beauty, but must express purity and simplicity in an effort to penetrate the depths of nature.

Japan's natural world has always provided beautiful flowers in all seasons; their beauty has decorated the simple everyday life of the people in all ages. At some point in the life of the Japanese people, this beauty came to have a spiritual meaning. At the beginning of the Edo Period, flower arrangement had earned the name of *Kadō* (the Way of the Flower), with its connotation of spiritual discipline. Even since, the art of flower arrangement has endured and flourished, giving rise to many schools.

GENRE PAINTING

Stability and urban and commercial expansion meant that ordinary citizens were able to play a larger social role. The folding screen *Rakuchū Rakugai Zu* (Sights In and Around Kyoto) by Kanō Eitoku, probably painted around 1574, depicts the life of



34 Merriment under the cherry blossoms. Early visitors from Europe inspired the curiosity of the Japanese people, and the European mode became one of the fashions of the time as reflected in this panel from a six-fold screen.



35 Scroll of urban and suburban sights. By Sumiyoshi Gukei (1631 – 1705). Aspects of ordinary daily life in and around the then capital of Kyoto are depicted in light touches and bright colors. The reproduced segment shows a toy shop.



36 *Tea ceremony.* The tea ceremony, having its origin in the custom of tea sipping among Zen monks, was developed into a highly polished cultural accomplishment. It became a vogue among upper-class people and later on, among the common people as well.



37 *Flower arrangement.* By Kitagawa Utamaro (1754–1806). Like the tea ceremony, flower arrangement was one of the indispensable cultural accomplishments for ladies in the Edo Period. Utamaro was a leading artist in the field of *bijin-ga* (pictures of feminine beauty).

the ordinary people in the bustling city of Kyoto. The many genre paintings of these times portray lives of freedom and leisure for the townspeople and describe the entertainment of the peasantry. Genre painting was also significant in that it opened a new field in Japanese art.

It was in the early part of the Edo era that a big transition occurred in genre painting: the subjects portrayed began to be chosen not from outdoor but from indoor life and the number of people depicted began to gradually decrease. Genre painting began to deal with young men and women (e.g., the Hikone Folding Screen), courtesans whose physical beauty was the focus of interest (the Matsuura Folding Screen and others), and bath-house girls (who worked at public bathhouses). Later, this led to paintings of beautiful women standing alone.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES AND THE BIRTH OF A TOWNSPEOPLE CULTURE

The Tokugawa Family which took over the government from the Toyotomi Family moved the Shogunate to Edo (present Tokyo). With its encouragement of learning and the arts, the center of culture also soon shifted to Edo. The Edo Period continued from the fall of the Toyotomis in 1615 until the restoration of power to the Emperor in 1867, covering a period of almost 300 years. By the time of the third Tokugawa Shogun, Iemitsu, the Shogunate had firmly consolidated its power and constituted the central government of Japan. Chu Hsi Confucianism provided the theoretical basis of Tokugawa rule. The metaphysics of Confucianism posit the opposition of cosmic forces, heaven and earth, the positive and the negative, the presence of which in nature is intended to justify a hierarchical order in the human world. Thus the distinction of social classes into the military, agricultural, industrial and commercial was established as the basic order of society not subject to change.

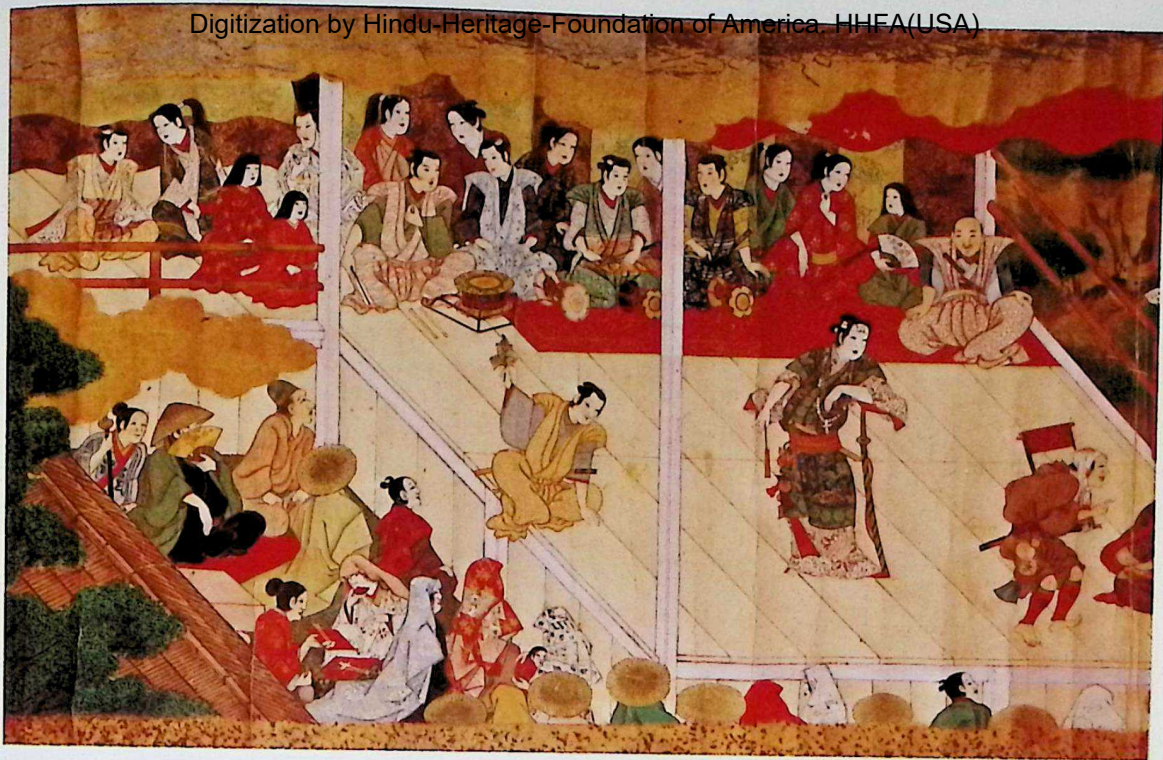
Nonetheless, as the commercial economy expanded, the warriors and agricultural class who depended on the produce of the land began to suffer from poverty, while the power of the merchant class, in whose hands commercial capital rested, continued to increase. On the whole, however, the standards of all classes

could be considered to have risen relative to earlier periods and one indication of this was the spread of culture among the masses.

BIRTH OF KABUKI

The prototype of Kabuki was a type of dance in which women appeared wearing unusual costumes. Originating in Kyoto at the beginning of the Edo Period, the dance was called *Kabuki Odori* and was noteworthy for its free style, innovation, and lewdness. These early dances and skits developed into plays with a definite dramatic structure. Ultimately women were banned from the stage because of the threat of civil disorder by men vying for their favors, and older men developed into serious actors of what came to be known as Kabuki. The plays dealt with history, legend and contemporary life, and the themes of humanity, loyalty and love dominated. Toward the middle of the Edo Period, a number of good playwrights emerged, through whose efforts Kabuki came to be the traditional drama of Japan.

The Kabuki stage inherited the shape of the *Nō* stage (the *Nō* is a dance-drama with its earliest origins in the Heian era) which in the earlier days the audience watched while seated on the ground in the open air. Later, however, two-storied Kabuki theaters with roofs appeared and the stage developed its own form equipped with a narrow extension of the stage into the audience known as the *hanamichi* (flower path) and a drawn curtain. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, elaborate stage machinery, including a revolve and stage lifts, was devised. The program for a day's presentation acquired a definite shape, including a historical play, a play of contemporary life and manners, and an additional dance play. The priority of acting above all else in the Kabuki has led to great importance being attached to the inheritance of the family



38 Uneme Kabuki play. An actress in male attire stands leaning on a sword. She wears a cross hung on her breast, not an emblem of faith but a new-mode accessory. Stage performances of this sort became the origin of present-day Kabuki.



- 39 Scene from the Miotsukushi Chapter of *Genji Monogatari*. By Tawaraya Sōtatsu. This masterpiece in bright colors and following well-established forms of composition exhibits the longing which Sōtatsu, an artist of neo-classicism, cherished for the romantic, aristocratic age of the past.



40 *Red and White Plum Blossoms: White*. By Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716). The contrast of plum trees with red and white blossoms in opposing positions, and the characteristically stylized depiction of the stream, reflect the artist's idealistic view of nature.



41 Lacquered writing box. By Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637). The box is decorated with a combination of various materials and techniques. Its boldly stylized motif illustrates an ancient poem-story about a pontoon bridge associated with a romance.

name and the acting tradition.

ART IN THE PERIOD OF CULTURAL MATURITY

As art appreciation spread among the masses, Edo artists enjoyed unprecedented prosperity.

The Kanō School had settled down to a life of comfort, having become the official government-patronized school, and as a result, their art became banal. Artists not in the employ of the government reacted against the domination of the Kanō School, and produced many new groups, such as the Sōtatsu-Kōrin and Maruyama-Shijō schools, *Bunjin-ga*, New Yamato-e, *Ukiyo-e* and the Western-style.

The Sōtatsu-Kōrin School tried to revive the Yamato-e tradition by giving it a modern decorative quality. Tawaraya Sōtatsu's folding screens, *Tale of Genji*, *Bugaku Dance*, and *God of Wind and God of Thunder*, and Ogata Kōrin's folding screens, *Irises* and *Red and White Plum Blossoms*, embody this school's fresh style.

The *Bunjin-ga*, which took the southern school of Chinese painting of the Ming and Ching dynasties as its model, was noted for its individuality and non-worldliness. People valued this type of painting as something different from the artisan-like works of professional painters. Masters of this type of painting were many; they included Ikeno Taiga, Yosa-no-Buson, Uragami Gyokudō, Aoki Mokubei, Tanomura Chikuden, Tani Bunchō, and Watanabe Kazan.

Maruyama Ōkyo and Matsumura Goshun stressed realistic portrayals of nature. In terms of technique, they pursued just the opposite of the Kanō School, and produced a light and easy style.

The Edo Period is of course significant in that the first

contact with Western art was made then. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Shiba Kōkan, a protégé of Hiraga Gennai, a scholar of Dutch studies, obtained books on oil painting and etching in Nagasaki, thus extending the vistas of Japanese art. Shiba worked on illustrative medicine, astronomy and geography, and at the same time made significant innovations in three-dimensional landscape painting through the use of Western-style perspective and shading.

CLASSICAL REVIVAL AND THE BEAUTIFUL *MAKI-E* (GOLD LACQUER)

Paralleling the development of sentimental and popular mass culture were efforts to raise the level of the classic, traditional decorative arts. As standards of living rose, demands for many kinds of industrial crafts also increased. At a time when machinery was still in a primitive stage, artisans with exacting skills were required even for the production of commodities such as lacquerware, pottery and china, and dyed and woven goods. This need led to the development of the traditional handicraft arts. The central figure in the field of crafts was Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637). Born to a family of sword judging specialists, he showed unusual skill in the visual arts, calligraphy, gold lacquer and pottery. His goal was to incorporate all the decorative arts into one.

A group of craftsmen led by Kōetsu established their workshops on a mountain northwest of Kyoto, Takagamine. Here they even built a village of craftsmen, thus creating a group united by their devotion to artistic endeavor. Kōetsu was really the first Japanese decorative artist whom one could say differed from a professional artisan.

The ideals Kōetsu held can be seen in his lacquers. The

history of gold lacquer is very long, going as far back as the Nara Period. It involves the most developed technique of all Japanese lacquer work. The nobles of the Heian era would order gold lacquer work even for their room furniture and temple interior decoration. Since that period, many excellent pieces using this technique have been handed down, but in terms of design, Kōetsu's bold and refined *Pontoon-Bridge* gold lacquer inkstone case and Ogata Kōrin's *Eight-Plank Bridge* gold lacquer inkstone case in the same style are most noble and belong to the category of the very best.

CERAMICS

The ceramic craft, which flourished in the Momoyama Period thanks to the popularity of the tea ceremony, continued to develop even after the end of that era. At the beginning of the Edo Period (in 1616), a kaolin mine was discovered at Arita, in present Saga Prefecture, and the first porcelain pieces in Japan were made. This white porcelain immediately became popular. It was after Sakaida Kakiemon created the first piece of enamel-decorated porcelain at the end of the Kan'ei period (1624–1644) that porcelain kilns in the Hizen district made rapid progress. Because Hizen porcelain was shipped from the port of Imari to other cities in Japan, it was also called Imari ware. The technique involved here was transmitted to other districts and gave rise to Kokutani ware.

In Kyoto, Nomura Ninsei added his own creative ideas to the technique of fusing gold and silver on pottery surfaces, and began to produce graceful color-enameled pottery, which served as the basis for the growth and popularity of Kyo ware. Ninsei's disciple, Ogata Kenzan, went even further in his creation of tasteful pottery

and added to the renown of Kyo ware. At about the same time, Nabeshima ware also began to be produced with purely Japanese techniques and taste.

POPULARITY OF *UKIYO-E*

“*Ukiyo*” means the life and manners of contemporary masses. The *ukiyo-e* is the style of painting created by Hishikawa Moronobu around 1681. Moronobu, living among the common people and feeling as they did, succeeded in heightening the aesthetic value of this genre painting to one meriting the name of a real popular art. The characteristic of the *ukiyo-e*, however, lay in the fact that they were sold cheaply in the form of mass-produced woodblock prints, and were easily available. Clever composition and refinement were added for effect. At the beginning, only simple monochrome black prints appeared on the market, but soon “red prints” appeared, using red as the chief tone to which yellow and green were added, and a new area in the history of Japanese painting was opened.

The sale of *ukiyo-e* prints in large quantities was a phenomenon paralleling the spread of literary works in a printed book form called *ukiyo-zōshi*. The subjects of the *ukiyo-e* were those familiar to and popular with the masses: the gay quarters, theaters, and sumo wrestling.

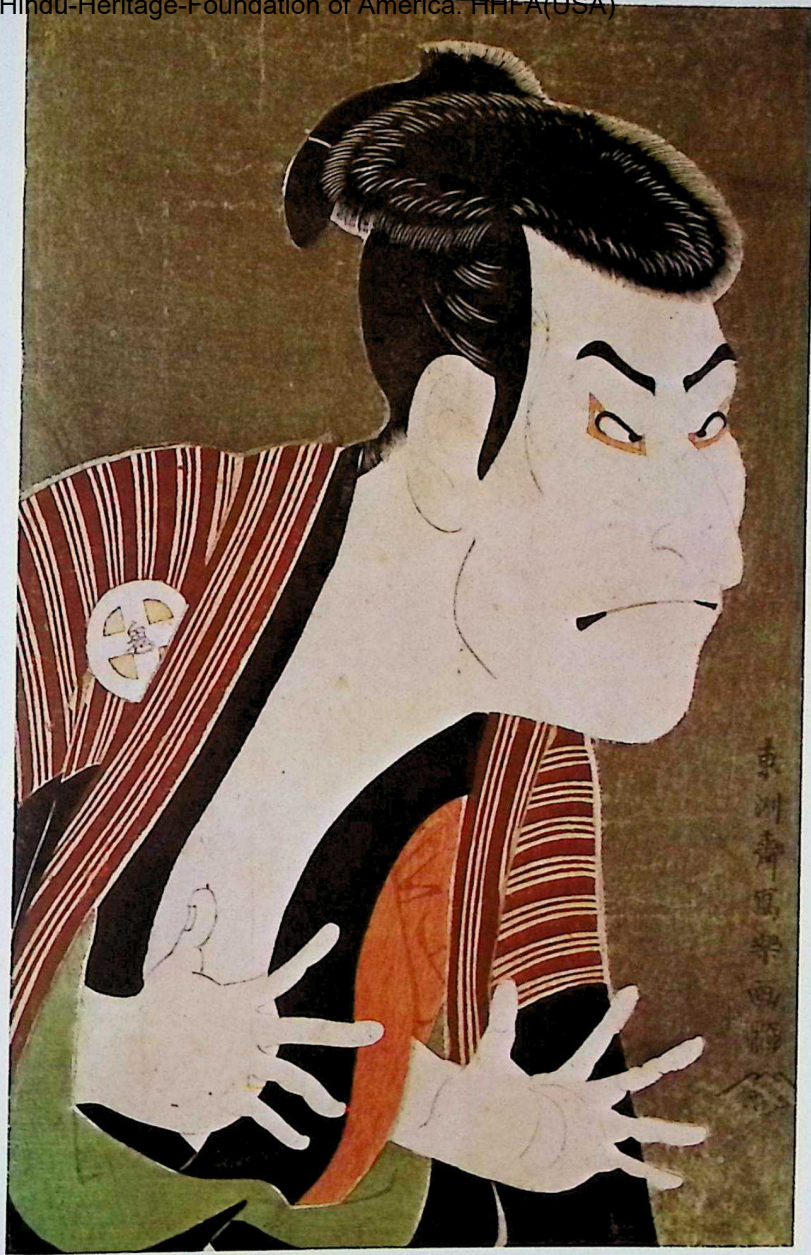
The Torii School, including the artists Torii Kiyomoto and Kiyonobu, played an important role in developing the branch of *ukiyo-e* called *yakusha-e* (portraits of actors), and thus also contributed to the development of Kabuki in the Edo Period. It should also be mentioned that the leading figure in *ukiyo-e* when it began to have more independence as a type of pictorial art from



42 Large dish, Kutani ware. The design in bold composition and firm brush work is characteristic of Old Kutani ware featuring heavy, impressive overglaze painting.



43 Jar, Kyoto ware. By Ninsei. Ninsei applied the technique of enamelled porcelain to pottery. Bright decoration in purely Japanese style, and a graceful form fashioned with his skilled wheel work, make this jar one of his representative pieces.



44 Actor Ōtani Oniji in the role of Yakko Edobei. By Tōshūsai Sharaku (late 18th century). Unlike other Ukiyo-e artists who portrayed Kabuki stars as handsome figures, Sharaku tried to depict their individual characteristics with almost cruel realism.



45 *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji: View on a Fine, Breezy Day.* By Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). Hokusai won high fame as a landscapist with his set of “*Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji.*” This print, popularly known as the “*Red Fuji,*” is particularly famous.

genre painting was Okumura Masanobu.

The "ukiyo" of ukiyo-e and ukiyo-zōshi refers to, as was mentioned before, contemporary life and manners, but it also had the connotation of licentiousness.

As time progressed, woodblock printing techniques became more and more intricate, culminating in the printing of full color ukiyo-e known as *nishiki-e*.

Such masters in the portrayal of beautiful women as Suzuki Harunobu, Torii Kiyonaga, and Kitagawa Utamaro made their appearance. They depicted extremely elegant and beautiful Japanese women, but their works lack individuality, are wanting in energy, and often suggest a decadent society. Among such works, Tōshūsai Sharaku's prints of Kabuki actors succeeded to a greater extent in capturing individual character, but his works were apparently not well appreciated in his own time.

Just at the point when portrait and genre subjects seemed to have exhausted their possibilities, ukiyo-e landscape prints were developed. Katsushika Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji*, Ando Hiroshige's *Fifty-three Stations on the Tokaido*, and other excellent works appeared. These ukiyo-e prints also greatly influenced the impressionist artists of the West.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE COLLAPSE OF FEUDAL SOCIETY AND MODERNIZATION

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 set the stage for Japanese modernization whereby a variety of new forces which had been gathering momentum under the old system burst into the open. During this remarkable period, Japan ended its isolation and feudal existence, and emerged to make its way into the international world as a modern nation. In terms of cultural history, it was a time when Japan started to absorb the modern cultures of Europe and America. From this time on, Western culture has continued to flow into the country.

In 1867, the Tokugawa Shogunate collapsed as if swept by an avalanche and a new government was set up with the Emperor as its nominal head. The downfall of the Shogunate was brought about by the rise of anti-foreignism in the form of a naive nationalism among the Japanese people, who had been forced to observe at close hand the modern military strength of Europe and America when Commodore Perry forced Japan to open its doors to the outside world in 1853. This anti-foreignism, expressed by the slogan "exclude the foreigners," was linked with the concept of imperial loyalty expressed as "revere the Emperor," and raised an absolute nationalistic consciousness directed toward the unification of the people under the Emperor as ruler. The

considerable energy which this produced led to the downfall of the Shogunate, although there was also the fact of a heightened political consciousness among the lower class of society.

The establishment of a new government by the loyalists who had pressed the Shogunate with their anti-alienism brought about a sudden change in attitude and the active importation of European and American culture. Such efforts were not limited to military affairs, but included the study of political, judicial, and economic systems. It was at this juncture that Japanese capitalism first began to grow. The new government was not bound to its inherent feudalism; it adopted thorough and deliberate "cultural enlightenment" measures, including the complete abolition of rigid class distinctions. The government also took the initiative in adopting a constitutional system, enacting the Meiji Imperial Constitution in 1889, setting up a system of constitutional monarchy.

The Japanese economy developed rapidly following the enactment of the Constitution, and in less than 60 years, Japan emerged as a modern capitalistic state. The rapid modernization of Japan, however, meant a number of attendant problems. The leaders of Japan at this time felt weak amidst the strong influence of world powers and reflected an impatience and sense of frustration which conduced them to try to deal with international problems by becoming a militarily strong country. Herein lay the limits of Japanese democratic modernization. Beyond these limits ran the road to militarism, which reached its climax in the Pacific War, a tragedy which nonetheless provided a possibility for Japan to be reborn.

ENCOUNTER OF TRADITIONAL AND WESTERN CULTURES

We have already discussed the way in which modernization in Japan might be viewed as a process of the assimilation of Western culture. During the Tokugawa Period, Japan had pursued a policy of seclusion, restricting its contact with the outer world to commerce only with China and Holland on the island of Dejima in Nagasaki. Inasmuch as this policy derived from a desire to maintain the status quo and perpetuate Tokugawa rule indefinitely, it is not strange that new discoveries and inventions should not be well received. The result, of course, was that when Japan emerged from its seclusion, it was, in the area of technology, far behind the Western powers.

In the fields of literature and art, however, the Tokugawa Period saw the enthusiastic development of several fields, leading to a flourishing of the distinctive elements of Japanese culture. Still, the contact with the West occurring at the end of the Tokugawa Period initially led to an awareness of the superiority of the science and technology of the West, especially in the military and medical fields. Accordingly, one of the first steps taken by the Meiji Government after its inception was the adoption of a policy of "civilization and enlightenment," including efforts to introduce foreign technology.

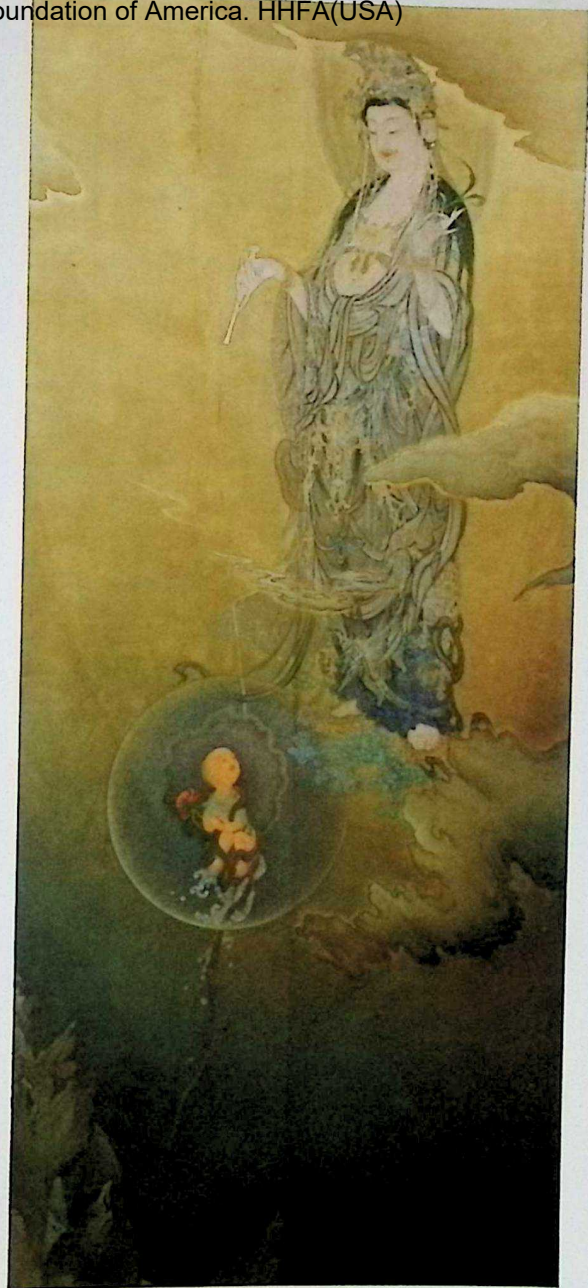
The introduction of technology necessitated a social organization and consciousness capable of absorbing it. The Meiji Government itself therefore implemented reform through the total abolition of the status system, the abolition of the clans, and the institution of a prefectural system in 1871. Furthermore, although Japan already boasted the world's highest rate of school attendance, achieved through its private primary school system in the Tokugawa Period, the government instituted in 1872 a system of

universal primary education. This system emphasized exclusively the acquisition of the skills of "reading, writing, and arithmetic (the abacus)," intending thus to provide a popular education suitable for modern society. Higher education was also advanced through the hiring of numerous Westerners, at extraordinarily high salaries, to serve as teachers and consultants. This measure was paralleled by increasing numbers of Japanese who went to the Western countries to study. Nor was it just a few elite people who were able to study Western culture, but through translation the number of people able to benefit was multiplied several times over.

This period is occasionally labeled an era of "Westernized culture." While this may be excessive, it was indeed a time when customs were adopted in a somewhat superficial fashion, provoking a counterreaction involving overemphasis on traditional culture.

That Western culture was nonetheless spreading and profoundly affecting the lives of people cannot be denied. What most often occurred, however, was an encounter between the two cultures, resulting in either mutual stimulation, or often in the arts, a highly desirable coalescence of forms. The traditional waka and haiku poetic forms, for example, were in decline, but underwent a complete transformation in the middle of the Meiji Period through a reform movement led by Yosano Akiko and Masaoka Shiki. Both forms thus came to occupy important places in literature along with the *Shintaishi* (new-style poetry) which Japanese poets had learned from Western literature.

In terms of the visual arts, things were at first dismal. Immediately after the Meiji Restoration, radical social change and utilitarianism dominated, leading to a tendency to make light of traditional art. It was the coming to Japan of the Englishman,



46 *Kannon the Merciful Mother. By Kanō Hōgai (1828–1888). With the cooperation of the distinguished art critics Okakura Tenshin and Ernest Fenollosa, Hōgai infused new life into traditional Japanese painting. A Buddhist subject is borrowed here to represent maternal love.*



47 *By the Lake*. By Kuroda Seiki (1886–1924). Having studied French “pleinairisme,” the artist discarded the rigid, dark expression of earlier Japanese oil painting in favor of soft, bright colors.



49 *Woman*. By Ogiwara Morie (1879–1910). Ogiwara studied under Rodin and created a new realistic style in Japanese sculpture. This statue was considered by critics of his time as representing “a woman rising out of the fetters of a feudal society.”

48 *Palace at the bottom of the Sea*. By Aoki Shigeru (1882–1911). Aoki, with his romantic subjects and colors, is called an artist of youth. The painting derives its subject from Japanese mythology.



50 *Pine Trees*. By Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958). Incorporating the tradition of Japanese painting and techniques of Western art, the youthful Taikan and his comrades established a new norm of native painting.

Charles Wirgman, and two Italians, Antonio Fontanesi and Vincenzo Ragusa, that introduced modern European techniques of painting and sculpture, and this gave rise to a new type of Japanese painting. Many excellent modern painters in the Western style appeared, including Takahashi Yuichi, Kuroda Seiki, Fujishima Takeji, and Aoki Shigeru.

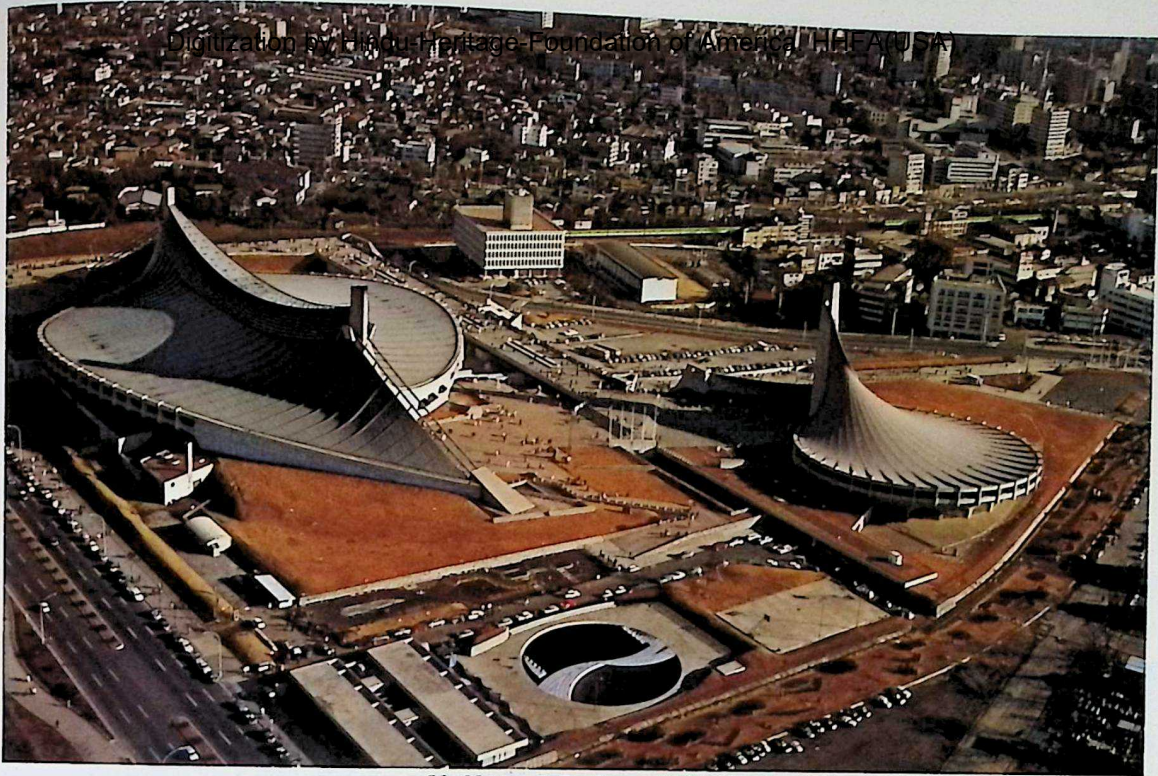
The American, Ernest Fenollosa, stressed the inherent value of Japanese classical art. Okakura Tenshin's movement to restore Japanese art to its proper place got underway. In 1888 the Tokyo School of Art (Tokyo Bijutsu Gakko) was founded, laying a new basis of a Japanese style of painting. Active in this period were Kanō Hōgai, Hashimoto Gahō, Yokoyama Taikan, Hishida Shunsō, and others, all engaged in Japanese-style painting.

Despite the technical interchange taking place between Japanese and Western-style painting, or the attempts to combine Japanese and Western instruments in the field of music, essential differences prevail, and will continue to prevail, between these two forms of expression of the respective cultures.

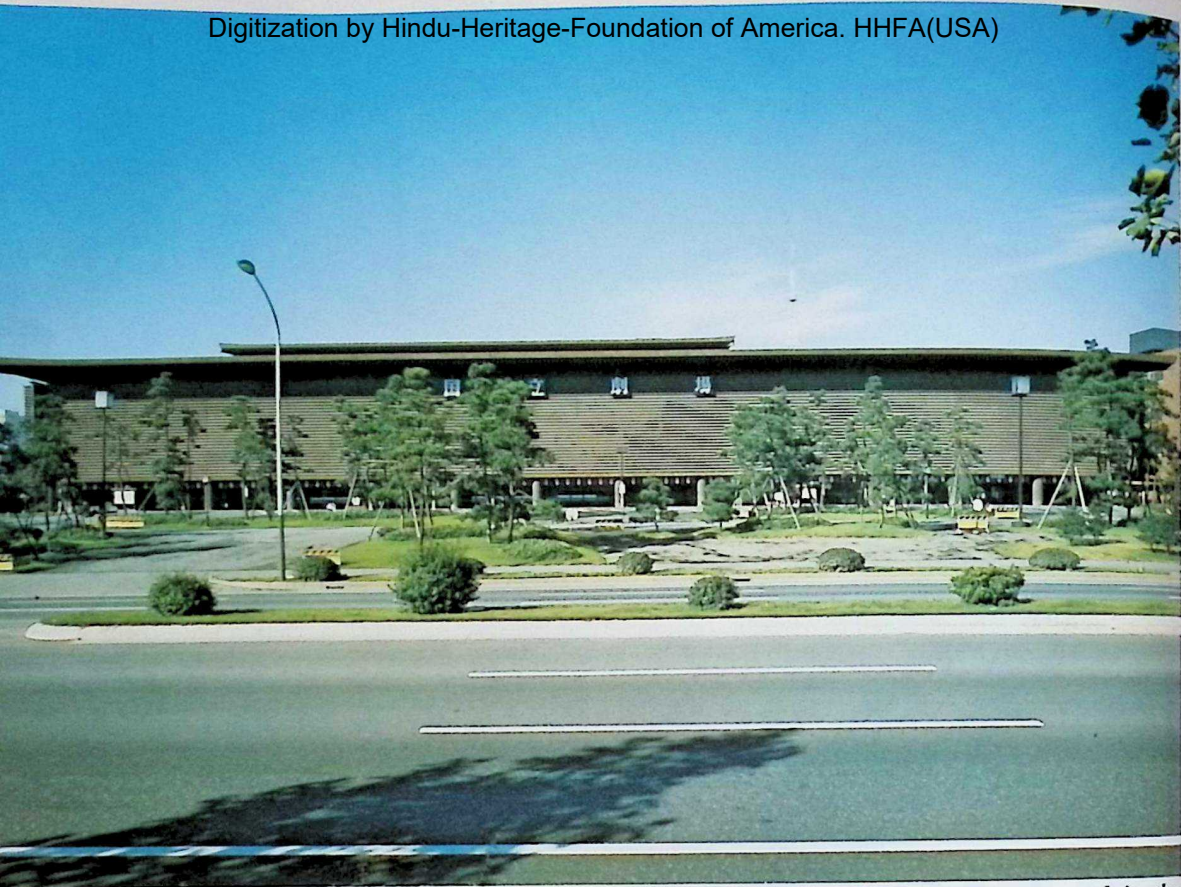
In the field of science and technology, Japan did not possess a tradition to match that of the West, but in the area of art, Japan did have a rich, mature tradition that was bound to survive and continue to develop with the assimilation of Western art. Even in areas of art like Kabuki or Japanese-style music, which of themselves allow for little possibility of development, efforts are being made to preserve the past tradition.

Contemporary Japan gives the impression of being a mixture of several varieties of imported culture, which would seem to have overwhelmed the native Japanese culture. Yet, upon reflection one discovers that there is a very Japanese element here. The history of Japanese culture is characterized by the bold acceptance and assimilation of foreign influences. There is a soil in Japan ready to

accept all sorts of culture, but the soil is conditioned by nature and other Japanese circumstances, which indicate the two basic features that have long characterized Japanese culture: adaptability and multiplicity.



51 National Stadium. 1964. Design by Tange Kenzō. A monumental work constructed for the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games using the latest in modern architectural techniques.



52 *National Theater of Japan. 1966. A building constructed in the traditional azekura (loghouse) style but with a modern interpretation. Kabuki, Bunraku and other traditional performing arts are presented here.*



53 *Exhibition of Contemporary Japanese Art.* This biennial exhibition shows works of representative artists of Japanese painting, Western-style painting, prints and sculpture, selected by a jury composed of leading art critics.

LIST OF PLATES

- 1 Deep bowl with flame ornament, Jōmon Pottery.
From Nagaoka City, Niigata Pref. Middle Jōmon Period (pre-historic age). Height 30.0cm. Mr. Kondō Atsuho, Niigata.
- 2 Jar with human mask ornament, Yayoi Pottery.
From Ozakatamachi, Shimodate City, Ibaraki Pref. Middle Yayoi Period (pre-historic age). Height 68.6cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 3 *Dōtaku* (bell-shaped bronze) with crossed bands design.
From Kagawa(?). Late Yayoi Period (pre-historic age). Cast bronze. Height 43cm. Agency for Cultural Affairs.
- 4 Haniwa figure of a seated woman.
From Oizumimachi, Ora-gun, Gunma Pref. Kofun Period, 6th-7th century. Fired clay. Height 68.5cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 5 Tomb of Emperor Nintoku.
Location: Sakai City, Osaka Pref. Kofun Period (proto-historic age), 5th century. (Photo by Shogakukan)
- 6 Izumo Taisha (Great Shrine of Izumo).
Location: Izumo City, Shimane Pref. Present structure built in 1744.

- 7 Western Precinct of Hōryūji Temple.
Location: Ikarugamachi, Ikoma-gun, Nara Pref. Asuka-Nara Period, 7th-8th century. (Photo by Japan Foundation)
- 8 Shaka (Śākyamuni) Triad.
By Kuratsukuri-no-Obito Tori. Asuka Period, 623. Gilt bronze. Height of Shaka (middle) 86.4cm. Hōryūji, Nara City.
- 9 Wall-painting of Hōryūji Temple.
Asuka-Nara Period, 7th-8th century. Color on mud wall. Hōryūji, Nara City.
- 10 Head of Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaiṣajyaguru).
Early Nara Period, 685. Bronze. Height 98.3cm. Kōfukuji, Nara City.
- 11 Gakkō Bosatsu (Cāndraprabhā).
Early Nara Period, 7th century. Clay. Height 206.6cm. Hokke-dō of Tōdaiji, Nara City.
- 12 Lady under the Tree.
Nara Period, 8th century. Screen panel, painted in color on paper. 56.0 x 136.0cm. Shōsō-in, Nara City.
- 13 Shōsō-in Repository of Imperial Treasures.
Location: Nara City. Nara Period, 8th century.
(Photo by Japan Foundation)
- 14 Main Hall of Tōshōdaiji Temple.
Location: Nara City. Nara Period, 8th century.
(Photo by Japan Foundation)

- 15 Takao Mandara.
Early Heian Period, 9th century. Hanging scroll, color on silk.
408.5 x 367.6cm. Jingoji, Kyoto City.
- 16 Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaiṣajyaguru).
Early Heian Period, late 8th – early 9th century. Wood.
Height 169.7cm. Jingoji, Kyoto City.
- 17 Amida Nyorai (Amitābha).
By Jōchō. Late Heian Period, 1053. Wood. Height 283.9cm.
Amida-dō of Byōdō-in, Uji City, Kyoto Pref.
- 18 Amida-dō (popularly known as Phoenix Hall) of Byōdō-in
Temple.
Location: Uji City, Kyoto Pref. Late Heian Period, 1053.
(Photo by Japan Foundation)
- 19 Fan-shaped Hoke-kyō Sutra.
Late Heian Period, 12th century. Fan-shaped book-form
volume, painted in color and written in ink on paper. Height
25.6cm., upper width 49.4cm. Shitennōji, Osaka City.
- 20 Illustrated Scroll of *Genji Monogatari* (Tale of Genji).
Late Heian Period, 12th century. Detached leaf of handscroll
painted in color on paper. 21.8 x 39.5cm. Gotō Art Museum,
Tokyo.
- 21 Scroll of animal caricatures.
Late Heian Period, 12th century. Handscroll, painted in ink on
paper. 30.5 x 1148.4cm. Kōzanji, Kyoto City.
- 22 Nandaimon Gateway of Tōdaiji Temple.
Location: Nara City. Kamakura Period, 1199.

- 23 Kongō Rikishi (Vajravīra).
By Unkei and Kaikei. Kamakura Period, 1203. Wood. Height 836.4cm. Nandaimon of Tōdaiji, Nara City.
- 24 Mujaku Bosatsu (Asanga).
By Unkei. Kamakura Period, 1208. Wood, painted. Height 193.0cm.
Nan-en-dō of Kōfuku-ji, Nara.
- 25 Red-laced armor, with helmet and shoulder-pieces.
Kamakura Period, 14th century. Height of body 33.3cm.
Kushibiki Hachimangū, Aomori Pref.
- 26 Portrait of Minamoto-no-Yoritomo.
Attributed to Fujiwara Takanobu. Kamakura Period, 13th century. Hanging scroll, color on silk. 139.4 x 111.8cm.
Jingoji, Kyoto City.
- 27 Ippen Shōnin E-den (illustrated biography of Priest Ippen).
By En-i. Kamakura Period, 1299. Handscroll, color on silk. 38.2 x 802cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 28 Autumn and Winter Landscapes: Winter.
By Sesshū (1420–1506). Muromachi Period, 15th century. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 46.3 x 29.3cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 29 Garden of Ryōanji Temple.
Location: Kyoto City. Muromachi Period, 16th century.
(Photo by Japan Foundation)
- 30 Main Donjon of Himeji Castle.
Location: Himeji City, Hyogo Pref. Momoyama Period, 17th century.

- 31 Cypress tree.
Attributed to Kanō Eitoku (1543–1590). Momoyama Period, 16th century. Eight-fold screen, color on gold-leafed paper. 170.3 x 460.5cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 32 Interior of the tea ceremony room, Tai-an.
Momoyama Period, 16th century. Myōki-an, Kyoto City.
(Photo by Japan Foundation)
- 33 Shoin (study and guest room) of Katsura Imperial Villa.
Location: Kyoto City. Edo Period, 17th century.
- 34 Merriment under the cherry blossoms.
Momoyama Period, 17th century. Pair of six-fold screens, color on gold-leafed paper. 151.0 x 352.0cm. each. Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo.
- 35 Scroll of urban and suburban sights.
By Sumiyoshi Gukei (1631–1705). Edo Period, 17th century. Handscroll, color on silk. 36.4 x 1094.4cm. Kombu-in, Nara City.
- 36 Tea ceremony.
Edo Period, 17th century. Handscroll, color on paper. 18.2 x 521.6cm. Osaka Municipal Museum of Art.
- 37 Flower arrangement.
By Kitagawa Utamaro (1754–1806). Edo Period, 18th century. Polychrome woodblock print. Tokyo National Museum.
- 38 Uneme Kabuki play.
Edo Period, 17th century. Handscroll, color on paper. 37.0 x 1669.5cm. Tokugawa Art Museum, Aichi Pref.

- 39 Scene from Miotsukushi Chapter of *Genji Monogatari* (Tale of Genji).
By Tawaraya Sōtatsu. Edo Period, 17th century. Six-fold screen, color on gold-leaved paper. 151.8 x 354.5cm. Seikado Foundation, Tokyo.
- 40 Red and White Plum Blossom: White.
By Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716). Edo Period, 18th century. Pair of two-fold screens, color on gold-leaved paper. 156.6 x 172.7cm. each. Atami Art Museum, Shizuoka Pref.
- 41 Lacquered writing box.
By Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637). Edo Period, 17th century. Design of bridge over pontoons in *maki-e* (gold-lacquer) and mother-of-pearl inlay. 24.2 x 22.6cm., height 11.8cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 42 Large dish, Kutani ware.
Edo Period, 17th century. Porcelain decorated in overglaze enamels. Design of myna birds. Diameter 42.2cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 43 Jar, Kyoto ware.
By Ninsei. Edo Period, 17th century. Pottery decorated in overglaze enamels. Design of moon and plum tree. Height 29.9cm. Tokyo National Museum.
- 44 Actor Ōtani Oniji in the role of Yakko Edobei.
By Tōshusai Sharaku (late 18th century). Edo Period, 18th century. Polychrome woodblock print. Tokyo National Museum.

- 45 Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji: View on a Fine, Breezy Day.
By Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). Edo Period, 19th century. Polychrome woodblock print. The Sakai Collection, Tokyo.
- 46 Kannon the Merciful Mother.
By Kanō Hōgai (1828–1888). Meiji Period, 1888. Hanging scroll, color on silk. 196.0 x 86.7cm. Tokyo University of Arts.
- 47 By the Lake.
By Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924). Meiji Period, 1897. Painting in oil on canvas. 68.0 x 82.0cm. Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties.
- 48 Palace at the bottom of the Sea.
By Aoki Shigeru (1882–1911). Meiji Period, 1907. Painting in oil on canvas. 181.5 x 70.0cm. Ishibashi Museum of Art, Kurume, Fukuoka Pref.
- 49 Woman.
By Ogiwara Morie (1879–1910). Meiji Period, 1910. Bronze. Height 99.0cm. The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.
- 50 Pine Trees.
By Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958). Taisho Period, 1913. Hanging scroll, color on silk. 194.0 x 85.0cm. Tokyo National Museum. (Photo by Shueisha)
- 51 National Stadium.
Design by Tange Kenzō.
Location: Yoyogi, Tokyo. 1964.

52 National Theater of Japan.

Location: Miyakezaka, Tokyo. 1966.

53 Exhibition of Contemporary Japanese Art.

Location: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery.



